

The Case of the clipper "Matilda Briggs"

My friend Sherlock Holmes stubbornly believes that the world is not yet ready for the history of the clipper "Matilda Briggs" and the terrible creature, a giant rat from Sumatra. Nevertheless, he allowed me to write this story and even refreshed my memory of some details. Watching how fast science changes our lives in these last decades of the nineteenth century, I became convinced that the time will soon come when the mysterious phenomena described herein are well understood and our scientists will be able to cope with the dangers that I should tell here.

One cold November evening, as I recall, we are with Sherlock Holmes, as usual, sitting by the fireplace in the house 221 Baker Street, sipping port, remembered our adventures.

- For me, Watson, the days are getting longer, but in fact they are all shorter - complained to a friend of mine. - The last six months I came across few cases that require mental effort. Even you with your well-known ability to give our sensational investigations have not been able to squeeze out of this worthless material. I feel like my brain is rusting from the fog and damp, while I'm here I toil from idleness.

- Well, well, Holmes - I said deliberately rude tone, fearing that he had not been defeated black melancholy. Since it is often the case, if his striking ability has no use, so he resorted to the dubious consolation - injections of cocaine. - Several weeks of rest you will only benefit. By the way, why do not you use them to work on the reagents that can detect blood stains? Did not you say that Harvey's research shows ...

Then I broke down the stairs to have survived the heavy footsteps: some burly man was running up the stairs. Judging by the indignant exclamations Mrs. Hudson, she followed in the footsteps of the unknown visitor.

- Wow, Watson, - said my friend, sat bolt upright in his chair, - perhaps, the worthy sailor will offer us a decent attention to the puzzle? Undoubtedly, he believes his work particularly urgent.

- Seaman?

- Of course, Watson. The rhythm of his steps suggests that it is accustomed to rolling sea. And it certainly is floating on a merchant ship ... Sign in! - He asked in response to a loud knock at the door. - Yes, on the trade because we can expect a higher shutter speed and calmness of those who belong to our valiant Navy and face-to-face meeting with the enemies of Her Majesty.

Meanwhile, the sailor has appeared before us. He was a man of mature age, with a tanned wrinkled face - especially a lot of lay wrinkles around the eyes, because for years he was staring intently at the far horizon. Blue form although it has had time to fade pretty, clean and ironed. I noticed epaulettes, established the rank mate.

- Mr. Holmes? - He said uncertainly, looking from one to the other of us. - I need to immediately speak with Mr. Holmes.

- It's me, - said Holmes. - Please, sit down in this chair and tell me what brings you here. Thank you, Mrs. Hudson, - he said, when the woman appeared in the doorway. She was out of breath, and her cheeks were burning. - I am very sorry that you have caused inconvenience, but our client urgent business. Of course, only the murder - he added, turning back to the sailor - could make a person of your rank to come here in person, and even in such a hurry.

Mrs. Hudson nodded and walked away, clearly derived from the equilibrium so unceremonious intrusion into her home.

- Two murder, Mr. Holmes - gloomily said the sailor, sitting in the chair - and even cannibalism in the bargain.

- My God, what a misfortune! - Exclaimed Holmes, trying hard to hide his delight. - Please give us all the facts and be so kind as to start from afar, with what preceded the events you mentioned.

- Certainly, sir. My name is Peter Bowman, and I am the first mate, "Matilda Briggs" from Briksema. A month ago, we set sail from Sumatra, taking on board a cargo of mahogany and copra. The captain, Mr. Blake, is also the owner of the vessel. We are engaged in the carriage of cargo and swim in the Yellow, East China and South China Sea, if podvorachivaetsja profitable freight.

When we at this time set the ship to dock at the port of Phangan on Sumatra, the first night on board one Chinese rose, a Mr. Lee. Captain Blake was waiting for him, but did not put me aware of this, and they spent a couple of hours in the captain's cabin. The next evening, the captain let the whole team to the bank, saying that he will keep watch. On his return early in the morning, I learned that Mr. Lee has the goods on board the vessel and that the Chinese sent with us in London.

- The captain always cares about the welfare of his team, which allows it to get drunk in port taverns, while he keeps watch on the ship? - Casually asked Holmes.

- Actually, no, sir. He has always been harsh. Yes, Captain Blake was strict and discipline on the vessel is maintained strictly.

- You said "was." Do I have to understand it so that it became one of the victims?

- Yes, sir. But this happened later, when we were near the Cape of Good Hope ...

- No, Mr. Bowman, please go back to the beginning. I should not have to interrupt you. Keep your story to the same place where you left off. You said that Mr. Lee is something loaded on the vessel. Can you clarify that it was for the goods?

- I can not say for sure, sir. He was already on board when I came back from shore leave. In the hold were loaded about twenty of heavy drums. When I asked the captain, that is in them, he said that this kind of ore. I did not ask more than: captain did not like when we pry into other people's business. And Mr. Lee in general with anybody and did not exchange a word.

- Yes, it is typical for the Chinese. Please continue.

- The return journey was not the best, sir. Not that something went wrong, but, you know, all of us were somehow uncomfortable, and even the Chinese all the time hanging around. And none of us smiled down into the cargo hold. However, there is nothing special to do, but there seems something smelled, and we did not like it.

We were at sea for three weeks and were just about to go around the Cape of Good Hope, when the captain was killed. The night was stormy as ever. I carried the watch on deck and was afraid, as if the wood, we were transported, did not move, and something is not damaged in the hold. The captain was in the wheelhouse. In bad weather it usually was steering. Probably no one trusted his ship, and rightly so. So, I took a flashlight and went downstairs to check out. It seemed that everything was in order, and I went back to his post. And suddenly we faced a wave. I almost washed overboard, and I would have lasted long in the water with such a storm. Cries rang - it poured on the deck the whole team. Boatswain Peter got up and returned to the helm the ship on course.

I immediately ran to the wheelhouse. The men huddled outside stranglehold holding handrails, most groaned in horror. I did not deal with them, and dashed inside. The captain lay on the floor cutting dead in a pool of blood. Nape was smeared with blood. I took a handkerchief and wiped it. Apparently, the captain was stabbed in the neck from behind. Strange hit, sir, and very strong. Probably they have chopped his spine and he died immediately. I turned the captain, and then ... Oh, Mr. Holmes, I have spent all my life in

the sea, and all navidalsya, but nothing like this has ever met. His left cheek is gone! It seemed to be cut off and chewed. was a red jaw and grinned white teeth in a gaping wound is visible.

He stopped and stared at the floor, breathing heavily. Holmes rose.

- Mr. Bowman, we did not wait to hear your story, we forgot about the hospitality. Let me offer you a glass of whiskey. - With these words he filled a large glass brim and handed it to the sailor, who drank half. - And now, if it's not too depressed you, I have to ask, what exactly do you mean by the words "cut and chewed"?

- That said, Mr. Holmes. The meat seemed to partially cut with a sharp knife, and partly otgryzli - well, his teeth tearing a dog.

- Clear. Of course, you buried the body in the sea?

- Yes, sir, the next morning. After all, we were so far away from the port, and in those latitudes, we just had no choice.

- Of course. However, I am because of this, unfortunately, lost valuable clues. signs of a struggle or anything else noteworthy on the scene have been discovered?

- No, Mr. Holmes. However, you should not forget that the sea was raging storm, and the deck is constantly flooded.

- Yes, unfortunately for me. But continue, I beg you.

- As senior officer, I took over the management of the vessel. Immediately I asked all members of the crew, where they were at the time and heard. But it gave me nothing. Most were in the tank, some of the men lying in the hammock, or was under the decks. Nobody heard anything.

- Has anyone from those you interrogated deserved, shall we say, special attention?

- Yes. As I have said the captain was harsh, and some members of the crew had reason to dislike him. Storekeeper Bailey happened to argue with him. Both were short-tempered, and although the captain did not say anything straight, we all knew that Bailey will count at the end of the voyage. And yet I do not think that Bailey, even enraged, could injure the captain. It was on the ship and a couple of sailors Indians, and I questioned them with passion. The captain did not like the color. He said that they are not what are fit and he

hired them only because they can be very little pay. He constantly Tapping them and with them would attack the captain in the darkness behind and stab him with a knife. Moreover, not so long ago these tribes was driven custom to eat the slain enemy. And, of course, do not forget about Mr. Lee.

- Ah yes, the mysterious Mr. Lee! What did he say?

- What I was asleep in his cabin. Nothing was heard or seen anything. And yet, when the ship off course, it took at least ten minutes before he appeared on deck. What was he doing all that time? And he did not look sleepy. However, you never know with these Chinese people what they think, and they would never tell. But I stayed in a lot of these eastern territories, Mr. Holmes, and I know how quickly there clutching the knife. I know some nasty tricks that they accomplish in the name of their pagan gods.

- I hope you will at least have examined it? It was not his skin suspicious bruises or scratches, blood on their clothes or hair?

- I did not see anything, sir.

- How do you proceed?

- I did not have sufficient reason to put someone under lock and key. All I could - is to make an entry in the logbook, and to order that all work on deck after dark, the men performed in pairs. The next day we stopped the boat, I read on the master of prayer, and sewing up the body into a canvas, we threw him overboard. We went to London for another ten days, and all had to work harder because of the double watches, but no one complained. More does not happen anything wrong, though, I tell you, all of us now and then looked back over his shoulder.

Early this morning we put the ship in the Royal Docks, and I was very busy: needed to organize the unloading of the vessel and sent a telegram to his brother Blake captain. Should notify him about the misfortune and call in London, so he figured out those who now owns the ship and to whom to give it a command. I'm not a whale look up words, sir, and more edged out than writing until it receives something worthwhile, so that not a shame it would be to send him. And this evening the ship was the second murder.

It was seven o'clock, and, of course, already dark - at this time of year and in this weather early in the dark. I tried to deal with the papers in the captain's cabin when he heard a scream. I rushed to the gangway, and then the cry was repeated. It seemed that he heard from the tween-decks [11](#) , where the sailors hung their beds. I was there a couple of

minutes, but it was too late. It was Bailey, a storekeeper. He was lying in his hammock, Mr. Holmes, but rather, entangled in it so that he could not hand or move a foot. Blood natekshaya from his body spattered deck under the hammock.

We are freed from the fetters of Bailey, but it was all over. On his chest were visible four parallel grooves, similar cuts are not very deep, which may have been caused by fast blows two-edged blade. But these injuries killed him. He died from a huge wound in the abdomen ziyavshey. We have seen the gut, which fell out of it. The terrible death, Mr. Holmes.

- Yeah, - absently agreed Holmes. - Tell me, Mr. Bowman, when to start unloading the ship?

This question seemed so inappropriate and unexpected that we are at a loss sailor stared at Holmes. Finally, Bowman responded:

- She would have begun about an hour after sunrise this morning, Mr. Holmes. The main stevedore hires longshoremen and gives them instructions at dawn.

- Clear. Please continue.

- I have little to add. We immediately called the police, and people from Scotland Yard are now on board. As for me, I laid out to the inspector everything I know, immediately took a cab and went to Baker Street. Mr. Holmes, I do not believe that the police will find the killer of my friends, but perhaps it will be possible for you?

- I can not express how grateful to you for what you have addressed this challenge to me, Mr. Bowman. Your cab is waiting outside? - Yes.

- In this case, release it: we hire hired carriage and hurried to the docks. Come, Watson: The game has started!

Our carriage rumbled over the cobbles Strand, circled in the City, and finally, on a nasty street headed to the docks. It was a long trip, which took place in silence, because my friend was not disposed to talk. Rare passers-by, who met us on the road, according to their view, were more likely to be at home in a dark foggy night.

The Royal Docks picture has changed. We could find "Matilda Briggs" without any help, since it has gathered near a crowd of onlookers. I push them out from similar large portly constable with bushy sideburns. When approached our crew, the officer suspected looked inside.

- Good evening, gentlemen, - he said. - I have to ask, what are you here for business.

- I'm Sherlock Holmes, - politely answered my friend. - I'd like to talk to the inspector on duty.

The constable saluted:

- Hello, sir. This case deals with Inspector Lestrade. I have no doubt that he would be happy to talk to you. Constable, who on board will take you.

Walking up the gangplank, we introduced the policeman on duty. He led us into the captain's cabin and sharp knock on the door, opened it immediately.

- To you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Inspector, - he said.

The cabin was not very big, and there is already settled Inspector Lestrade, who was sitting at his desk, and a gentleman of Chinese appearance, who stood before him. Behind him loomed the mighty Chinese policeman. The three of us barely squeezed into the cabin.

- Ah, Holmes! - Cardio said Lestrade, collapsed in a chair. - I am happy to see you here. And you too, Doctor. However, I'm afraid you will not find anything interesting here. The point, consider already disclosed. Even we, the ordinary police, could untangle it without your help.

- I did not doubt, Inspector, that you immediately arrest someone - pleasantly remarked Holmes. - After all, as I understand it, Mr. Li was taken into custody?

- Exactly. We just received the case from the judge warrant and searched the luggage of all on board. The search sailors' chests gave nothing, but Mr. Lee found a very interesting collection. - He pointed to a strange set of objects on a table. - In this bottle, apparently contains a strong sedative - certainly, we give it for analysis. Leather belts with buckles are able to keep the raging bull. Here you have a noose. And at the trident are traces of blood. The sleeve of Mr. Lee found a curved knife - no doubt that this is the murder weapon.

- A spectacular catch, Inspector, I congratulate you, in fact. It significantly clarifies the matter, - said Holmes.

- Clarifies? Yes, thanks to this held evidence case can be closed.

- Maybe, but some small things do not add up. For example, why was Mr. Lee to take on the road with a killer collection? Is it intended to permanently disrupt on someone angry, causing injuries to sailors ... And why it so many guns? Not much there for such a purpose? You do not enlighten us on this matter, Mr. Lee?

A Chinese man, without answering, looked at dispassionately Holmes.

- Of these, you will not catch the words - dismissed Lestrade. - However, it does not matter. As soon as he will appear before an English jury, and I will show them the items, it certainly strung - recognized or not.

- Undoubtedly, - I have agreed to my friend. - But you can not if I, with your permission, the inspector, to inspect the cargo hold?

- Please, if you wish, Holmes, but we were all already searched. The hold nothing but the cargo timber.

- Thank you, Inspector. In my opinion, there is always the possibility that the board is a stowaway, and cargo hold - the only place on a small boat, where he could hide.

Lestrade laughed:

- This is too much even for you. You do not think that a person can disappear for a month and not leave traces. For example, what he ate?

- And yet, with your permission, I'll look.

Lestrade shrugged his shoulders:

- As you like, Holmes. We'll go with you. Now I have nothing more to do, so that I can stretch my legs.

We went out on deck and proceeded to a large hatch, which Mr Bowman raised for us. He came down and lit the first pair of lamps that were stored under the stairs. Holmes and I followed him, then Lestrade, Mr. Lee and his watchman cops. The hold was stuffy, smelled strongly of wood and copra.

- Payload - said Holmes. - Mahogany to decorate houses, which are built in a variety of in our city, and the flesh of the coconut, which is used in the production of many varieties of soaps and lotions.

Without another word, he pulled out a magnifying glass, and took in the other hand a lantern, and began to examine the hold. My friend climbed on logs and rummaged among the bales of copra. At first he was prowling around, but then narrowed the scope of his search. Then he rushed to the pile of logs and soon let out a triumphant cry:

- Come here and look at it, Inspector!

We rushed to Holmes. He stood at the end of the stack. Roughly hewn adze or some other primitive instrument logs were stacked along the length of the vessel. Many of these venerable forest giants reach five feet in diameter. Because of the difference in the size of the logs laid tightly without gaps it was quite impossible, and among them were many gaps. Holmes pointed to one big hole, about two feet square.

Lestrade took the constable lantern and bent, peering suspiciously.

- Fu, rats smell! - He exclaimed.

- Please, Inspector, climb deeper - Holmes insisted.

Lestrade reluctantly complied with his request and crawled forward on his stomach.

- Well, well, - came from the crack of his voice - but then settled whole brood of rats! Everywhere straw and rat droppings.

- I think you are mistaken, Inspector. Judging by the trail, then hid only one animal.

- Why would someone keep a rat here? Why would generally need a rat? - Said Lestrade, with some difficulty getting out of the gaps between the logs.

- Pay attention to the size of the litter and scratching of claws on the wood. I would say, Inspector, that this rat reaches a length of at least four feet! That's why it had to keep the secret here.

- But this is nonsense! - Said Lestrade, as we looked at each other incredulously Bowman.

- And yet it is precisely this size, - said Holmes. - Traces of the claws leave no doubt. Thanks to this design here - he kicked a rough wooden lattice bonded nails - an animal kept in his paddock. And there is no doubt that the rat courted Mr. Lee. I found fragments of red silk robe, which is now on it - they clung to the sharp edges of the saw cut. And this hole is a trail of copra pieces. - He turned to Mr. Lee: - At night, you were going down through a

small cargo hold near your cabin. You were fed rat copra from one bale and how can take care of her other needs. Fortunately for you, the rats are very tenacious, so that a few weeks in the hold, would not have brought great harm to the animal. You want to take her to live in England. For what purpose, may I ask you something?

Lee stood grimly, still keeping silence.

- Come on, Mr. Lee, - said Holmes suavely. - Do not you understand what that means? It is clear that this rat was the cause of death of two people, which means that you, at least not paid with his life for the murder, but against you, and you can push other charges. Exclusively in your best interest to tell us the details.

- Well, - finally said Lee. - I'm taking a rat. I take it to the British Museum and sell. Your scientists are very interested in this rat. Captain Blake to know all about it and agree.

- Ah, the unfortunate Captain Blake. How does the rat escaped into the wild at the time?

- There was a strong storm. I stumble when giving the rat food. She brushed past me on deck. When I come to the captain, too late. I put a rope on a rat while she nibbles, and stab her until she leaves him.

- Hence, the blood on the trident. It will be possible to establish that it belongs to the rodent, and not man, - said Holmes. - And today's accident happened, of course, because you had to translate rat in another place. If she had stayed here longer, she would have found the dockers. After the death of Captain Blake's no one else could for your convenience to delete all of the ship. Li bowed

- Yes. I try to give a rat sleeping pills, but she was very angry, very strong. She jump on me and fell to the ground. I think it is killing me, but I hit her cell door. Then she run away: first kill, someone finds.

Holmes nodded: - It is easy to imagine the rage and fury of a beast, when he was released after so many weeks. Maybe he lashed out at Bailey to avenge GRT people for their imprisonment. Now, Mr. Lee, where a rat?

Lee shook his head. - Rat left. I do not know where.

- That's it, the inspector, - said Holmes. - The evil creature walks on the East End. We must do everything to catch it.

On Lestrade's face was disgusted. He was prepared to accept congratulations - inflexible guardian of the law, the offender grabbed one hour after the initiation of the investigation, and here please - start the hunt for the elusive killer that does not promise a true success.

- I'd better get back to Scotland Yard, and to speak with the boss - he said angrily. - As for you, my friend, - he said to Lee, - until I leave you free, but you should not leave the ship. We'll go back and ask you a lot of questions, okay?

Lee reluctantly bowed in assent.

- We also have to go, - said Holmes. - We go to Baker Street, Watson. We may be able to provide some kind of assistance to the inspector in this case.

I find it hard were given the next few days. I do not like to sit around for a long time. As for Holmes, he bought a large map of the East End and pinned her to the wall. Every now and then he brought some plans and drawings from large companies in charge of urban and architects, and it maps the network of colored lines.

- Is not it obvious? - He said, when I asked why all this is necessary. - Where is the rat hiding? Mainly in the sewage and wastewater pipes laid under the streets. Of course, the Sumatran rat is much more local their counterparts, but that does not mean that it is not endowed with their instincts. Therefore I make a plan of its possible shelters. Different colors are used to indicate I of pipe sizes and depths at which they are laid, and these icons show different approaches to the pipes. So we demarcated territory on which to search for our rat.

- Amazingly, Holmes! - I exclaimed in delight. - I have to admit, I never suspected that we have hidden such a tangled maze underfoot.

- What do you think, Watson? Rivers that flow into the Thames: Flit, Tyburn, Holborn and many others, are now enclosed in a stone bed and are hidden under the ground, and above them, built a great city. Yes, now they are reminiscent of a street name. Between them runs a huge network of water, sewer and drain pipes, which serves as a convenience million inhabitants metropolis.

From time to time we have to cop to the next message from Lestrade. A day after the escape of giant rat was the nightmare of the East End. Mother locked up their children, and themselves ventured to go out only during the day, and then not for long. The most inveterate drunkard hesitated a long time before joining the cheerful company in a tavern. Every now and then the bodies were found gutted and half eaten by dogs and cats.

Fortunately, the rat clearly prefer small prey largest and most scavengers rather than killed. Several times it faced inhabitants preport areas. She jumped out of the garbage heaps, which are common on local streets, and quickly hid in the dark. When we become aware of such meetings, Holmes put on the map the red dot and wrote beside it the date and time.

- Notice Watson beast catch easier than a man. Of course, this animal has its advantages: it is agile and easy hiding in tunnels, where we are not able to or do not dare to turn up behind him. But an animal does not have the ability to think and inferior human cunning. He thinks only about how to find a comfortable den, and a couple of food. This being true to their habits, knowing that we can easily catch it. My plan is ready. Now we calculate where the rat's nest. It's just a matter of time.

And the next day, after analyzing the next stream of reports of nocturnal adventures of a rat, Holmes let out a triumphant cry:

- Ready, Watson! She lies here in this tunnel, waiting for nightfall. - End of the line, he pointed to the blue line on the map. - This is the pipe through which waste water sent from Limehouse in the Thames. From the scheme of movement of rat clear that she wandered around the area in search for a suitable den, and now found the perfect refuge, dry and quiet place with access to the street, where you can earn one. And now, Watson, I should have left a few hours to build. We will meet again this day, in the evening, and I am counting on you and your army revolver!

Twilight Falls took us on Dangerfield Street, Limehouse. Holmes led me to a wide hatch in the side of the street, where a draft was drawn and the stench came.

- I think it is here, Watson, the rat will go on the hunt. However, there are two other possibilities, and it is possible that we will be in vain watch it today. However, let's try!

He reached into a canvas bag he'd brought with him and pulled out a handful of grain.

- We have a little scatter bait with small intervals in the hope that it will send the beast which we need. We use the same principle as the anglers with their bottom bait: food is enough to cause an appetite, but not enough to be satisfied.

After a few steps toward the entrance to the back alley, he poured another small hill grains.

- We did everything we could, Watson, and now occupy an observation post, which I prepared, - he said.

A little after passing the alley, he knocked on the door. Soon it opened, showering us smell rotting matting and mortar. Holmes thanked the old man, open to us, and started up the narrow stairs. Reaching the top of the stairs, we entered a small room. just abandoned our lane was visible from her window.

- We'll wait here, - said my friend. - I intercede in the first watch, and then you change me. We'll be watching out for the barn. In it, I left the half-decayed lamb, which purchased from Smithfield - alas, not without difficulties. As you can see, the door ajar. I changed the loop to specific, so now the door closes by itself under its own weight. Black thread tied to the carcass, holding the door open. If a thread breaks, the door slammed shut. But do not count on the fact that the trap permanently keep the rat. Beast such power, no doubt, quickly break or progryzet fragile barrier.

Holmes paused and took up his post at the window. An hour later, when he felt that his attention is waning, we swapped. About eleven, after the fourth time I went on duty, I felt as if someone sneaks in the darkness. I looked carefully, but did not see anything, and then suddenly heard the barn door shut. And immediately there was the sound of impact, something heavy struck on the door loudly and violently zaskrebli tree long claws.

- Come on, Watson! - Cried my friend.

We ran down the stairs, out the door and in all haste rushed down the lane to the barn. There I was, to her horror, discovered that one of the boards under the door is now amenable to continuous attacks.

- Take it! - Yelled Holmes, in whose hands was a fishing net, and threw me one end. I barely had time to grab him when my friend put his hand on the latch, and shouted: - Now, hold on!

As soon as the dim night light penetrated into the barn, I heard the clatter of claws - the animal rushed out into the street. It is with such force crashed into a network that I fell down. However, the network I have not released, but struggled grabbed her and pulled to her. Holmes ran around the rat tightly entangling its network.

- Gotcha! - Rejoiced my friend. - I was never in your debt for the invaluable assistance. What is unique what a superb specimen!

He enthusiastically looked at the rat, which could not be released, but nevertheless still struggled violently. In turn, I did not take his eyes off her, full of horror. This dark gray beast did reach four feet in length. Her eyes met mine, and I think I've never seen someone's eyes expressed so much senseless rage. Large yellow incisors were bare, long nails protruded through the network in impotent desire to reach us.

- One more, one last effort, Watson, and we will be able to relax - promised Holmes. He turned to the barn and immediately returned with a large and sturdy cage. - I have it now amassed a local carpenter, - he explained. - What is good in the East End, the master is always at hand. At Baker Street, I would need much more time to organize everything.

Following his instructions, I took hold of the free end of the network on the one hand, he grabbed it with another. Picking up a network, we put a rat in a cage. I must admit I felt a considerable relief when he saw Holmes securely locks it.

- If you keep watch, - he said to me, my friend, is in good spirits - I'll make it up to the carrier, which saw a sign for a couple of blocks away. However, now almost midnight, but a few sovereigns, of course, will be reimbursed to him interrupted sleep.

Half an hour later, Holmes returned to the gig. By this time, the animal calmed down. I found a large piece of burlap and covered cage. The fewer people see a rat, the better, I reasoned. We Holmes raised the cell and placed in a two-wheeled cart, then took seats next to the driver.

- The Royal Docks, buddy! - Holmes declared when the driver cracked his whip.

- At the docks? - I hissed Holmes. - But of course we have to take the animal to the inspector Lestrade!

- You have no respect for property, Watson? - Sardonicly I asked my friend. - This animal rightfully belongs to Mr. Lee, and it is our duty - to return to its owner.

I do not say a word, and less than an hour, we were back at the pier, where there was a "Matilda Briggs." We removed the cell, Holmes paid to the driver, and he thanked us, went home to fill up.

When we moved to the gangway, deck appeared ominous figure of Mr. Lee. I doubt if he ever sleeps. The Chinese bowed to us.

- Very good for you morning, Mr. Lee! - Warmly welcomed him Holmes, who was standing on the dock. - I am happy to inform you that we have found your rat and she is now resting in the cage.

Hearing this, Li strode down the gangplank, holding with a truly oriental dignity, and walked to the cage. He lifted the corner of burlap and stared at the beast. Little standing so he again pulled his hands into the sleeves, then bowed deeply. His whole posture expressed distrust.

- I am very grateful to you, gentlemen, - he said, for the first time all night by contacting us.
- The rat is very valuable for me. Perhaps you will do me the honor of accepting a small gift?

- Thank you very much, Mr. Lee, but we can not accept it. We just performed their duty to society. In addition, hunting was very exciting! Goodbye, sir! Come, Watson. We went away, and looking back, I saw that Mr. Li is still in the cells, looking after us.

When we returned to Baker Street in a cab, I took a chance to talk to Holmes:

- Undoubtedly, the British Museum buys a rat, but, in my opinion, the circus would have paid more.

- You are, of course, did not believe this fable, Watson? Department of Natural History of the British Museum, no doubt, would be interested in the rat, but they prefer not to live specimens and stuffed. Circus indeed would be a better option, but Mr. Lee is hardly familiar with our British institutions. No, when Mr. Lee took to deliver a rat living on our shores, he launched into this troublesome and dangerous enterprise in the hope of a large profit. Captain Blake was obviously privy to his plan and is also expected that he will be paid well. Behind all this, Watson, is some kind of a person, who wished to give her a live rat, and secretly, and able to generously pay for it.

- Good God! So behind it some vile criminal conspiracy?

- It is possible. However, some details suggest other possibilities. Tomorrow night we'll know for sure.

- Do you think that Lee is not afraid to act so quickly?

- And why should he hesitate? As we have seen, the rat - a dangerous animal. In addition, Lee afraid that Lestrade has not charged him that he allowed the rat to escape. His interests as their own money as soon as possible to get and get out of our country.

So, the next night we were back in the Royal Docks. This time we chose a place at the turn of the road leading to the wharf. From there we could follow the "Matilda Briggs," and we could not see with the clipper. On that day we slept until noon, so that felt fresh and rested.

At eight o'clock the ship pulled up to the cab. We watched as the driver and several sailors unloaded the first cell with a giant rat, and then came back and drove down the gangplank first big barrel.

- My God, Holmes - I blurted out - and I somehow forgot all about the drums! What's in them is, what do you think?

- Pitchblende, Watson, - replied my friend. - It is also known as uraninite. When we were on the ship, I was able to take a sample from the same barrel, which departed riveting.

- Uraninite? And for what it is used?

- From this it is possible to remove some material, but as far as I know, he does not have any unique features. Let us hope that, after procuring more information, we will clarify the matter.

Sailors worked quickly and disputes, and soon migrated to the entire cargo carriage. Mr. Lee sat next to the driver, and they departed.

- We follow them on foot, - said Holmes. - They dragged with the snail's pace that the pursuit at the cab would be seen.

Harassment has stood long and tedious. The crew all the time moving in a westerly direction, and after about three hours arrived at the Oxford Street. From there, he turned to Cavendish Square, then in Harley Street. After passing a little on this busy street, he stopped in front of the imposing house.

- At this point you card in hand, Dr. [\[2\]](#), - said my friend. - Whose is this house?

- I think, Dr. Trelawney, - I replied. - Several times I heard him lecture. His specialty - the science of nutrition. He is very popular among the aristocracy - advising them of the diet when they are unwell. He also devotes much time to the Westminster Children's Hospital, where free treats sick children.

- Decent people - said Holmes. - Let's wait a little bit.

Lee rang the bell, and the door was opened by a well-built man. I recognized him as Dr. Trelawney. The three men unloaded the crew. After another load was added to the house, followed by a long pause - probably I had to drag him away. Finally, the work was finished, and the driver is back on the box. Li bowed low to the doctor and took his seat beside the driver. Trelawney goodbye waved Chinese and entered the house.

- What do we do now, Holmes? - I asked when the hackney was out of sight.

- We ask the good doctor, - replied my friend. - Why not? After all, he has not committed any crime.

With that, he went to the door and rang the bell. Soon he appeared on the threshold Trelawney, whose face was written suspicion.

- Good evening, gentlemen, - he said to us. - Of course, you know that now almost midnight? I have no doubt that you have an urgent matter to me.

- Honestly, no, - Holmes admitted. - However, it is through our efforts was again caught a huge rodent, which was delivered to you, and we experience a natural, albeit immodest, curiosity about his fate.

- What's your name, sir?

- Sherlock Holmes.

- I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes. I must say that I think your activity unnecessary, since we have already more than half a century, there is a competent police. However, in this case, I thank you for your intervention. I have followed the development of events in the newspapers, for fear that they will kill a rat, or that it will disappear forever. This would greatly slowed my research. Please visit.

- And now, gentlemen, - he said, when all of us were standing in the lobby - I have no particular objection to satisfy your curiosity. After I in any way intend to give the world the

fruits of my research when they are completed. However, I'm counting on your silence. My research will revolutionize society, and I fear a premature revolution, which could happen at the mere hint of them.

- For a man of my profession, detective consultant, secrecy is a prerequisite - assured Holmes. - You can safely trust me with your secrets.

- And me too, of course - I added.

- Very well, gentlemen. I beg you to follow me.

Trelawney has led us to the fourth floor to the heavy door, locked on the two locks: one was located high on the level of his chin, the other - very low. Behind the door was hiding a large room equipped as a laboratory. At first glance, there was the usual: for cells of the experimental animals at one of the walls; shelves for chemicals and reagents; a full set of glass bulbs and tubes on the desktop. In short, everything in the lab any of our large hospitals, in which students are trained. Cage with a giant rat was standing on the floor. When we entered, the rat stared at us, grinning with obvious threat. Perhaps I tend to fantasize, but I thought that she recognized those deprived of her freedom.

The only unusual thing was a large plaster model on a table in the middle of the room - I immediately recognized Sumatra. The model was painted blue, green and brown paint to indicate the nature of the terrain, and studded with lots of thin wooden sticks.

- Can I ask you first look at these patterns? - Trelawney asked, pointing to the window of the wall.

Looking at her, I froze in amazement. I have never seen before such a collection of samples of hypertrophy. Only four short shelf, but a variety of organisms - are widely known, and for all that damaging large size. Here, for example, a giant snail length of nine inches, placed in a jar of formaldehyde. Several leaves within me belonged to an unknown tropical plants, but I recognized the familiar outlines of an oak leaf - though he was long almost a foot. I attended here and skull of a giant monkey, and pineapple, which would be enough for all the guests at the banquet with the Lord Mayor. And pressed dung beetle the size of a cat. There were here and other artifacts, and they all share a startling dimensions.

- Everything you see here, gentlemen - Trelawney continued after we had seen enough in his collection - gathered in a particular area of the island of Sumatra my agent Mr. Lee. He holds a pharmacy in Penang. Many years ago I entered into correspondence with him. I needed his help for the acquisition of a rare plant that stimulates the appetite. One day he

sent me a sample of the plant, ten times more than usual. Mr. Lee said that while traveling in the interior of the island with a view to restock stumbled upon a place where, to his surprise, many representatives of flora and fauna grow to gigantic proportions. I offered to pay well for the new models, and even in those places are very difficult to penetrate, he could send me a copy for a number of years, which you see here, as well as a detailed report.

As you can see, there is presented the entire natural world: plants, insects, reptiles, mammals, and even people. From this I conclude that the giant size is not an inherited property. Rather, growth is stimulated by some environmental features.

- So, this skull, - I interrupted, pointing at the object, which took over the skull of a huge monkey - belongs to the man?

- Yes it is. Skull structure leaves no doubt: it belonged to a hitherto unknown fossil subspecies of man, the gigantic dimensions. It may well be that from here went to the modern legends of giants [\[3\]](#).

So, I will continue. Having concluded that this part of the island there are the conditions in which the accelerated growth of biological organisms, I spared no effort in order to find out what kind of conditions. Finally, giving invaluable Mr. Lee commissioned a detailed study of the area, I think I discovered the active substance. - Trelawney paused and looked at us with an air of triumph.

- This is the case, not pitchblende? - Asked Holmes.

Trelawney was struck.

- I see that your reputation is in no way exaggerated, Mr. Holmes. Yes, there really lies a very rich vein of uranium ore, and I am convinced it is in uraninite whole thing. In small doses, it seeps into the soil during the rainy and absorbed from her plants. They feed on herbivores, which in turn serve as food for carnivores. Finally I got a good supply of uraninite, which is placed in its cellar. It remains for me to carry out a series of experiments to determine at what age, under what conditions and in what quantities should be given uraninite. I hope that thanks to the live instance of rat to obtain important information. Once I do this task - what I have, of course, it will take no more than a year or two years - we will be able at will to grow giants.

- Of course, this discovery is of great scientific interest, - let me say I am - but whether it can bring about a revolution, of which you speak?

Trelawney looked surprised at me:

- Do not you understand, Dr. Watson as the discovery will change human life? When the meat one pig or a sheep can feed a dozen people when several giant spikelets of wheat is enough to bake a loaf, we will forever banish from our world hunger. A huge mass of people to get rid of the need to spend all their time trying to earn a living. And is not this entail a real rise in the development of art and science? I tell you with all responsibility, gentlemen: we are on the threshold of the golden age!

All I heard and seen much excited us. The next few hours we spent with Dr. Trelawney in his living room, discussing the importance of the discovery. We drank a good old brandy for the success of research. In the end, just before dawn, we bowed and walked on Baker Street, the benefit was not far to go. At home we have plunged into a deep sleep, which is deserved, successfully completing tedious investigation.

For a long time we have not heard anything about Dr. Trelawney, although I was looking through the newspaper, waiting for the reports that he is ready to give the world his discovery. And only a year later, when we were sitting at the breakfast table, Holmes gave me a letter.

- It will be interesting, Watson, - he said.

Then, getting up from the table, he began to pace, as he usually when I was immersed in deep thought. Here is what was contained in the letter:

Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,

As you with Dr. Watson, the only ones who know the direction of my work, I have to write to you, to warn about the terrible danger STI, threatening anyone who tries to repeat my experiments.

After many failed attempts, I realized that taking uraninite does not affect the development of the animal. Later, after some experimentation, I made a very important discovery: if a pregnant female be placed next to a large amount of this substance, it will be born ugly. In rare cases, they were giants, but more often - ridiculous monsters of various kinds, some with two heads, others without limbs. Sometimes it born something so terrible that it is impossible to imagine.

Most of these creatures lived long, and I can only assume that the Sumatran jungle were a favorable environment for the development of large organisms. Through natural selection, they prevailed there. However, it is possible that Mr. Lee, seeing what my interest is directed, chose not to inform me about the monsters.

Anyway, I made another discovery about the nature of uraninite, I became ill with cancer and, in the opinion of my doctor, I live only a few weeks. My conclusion is that under the influence of the substance changes the natural course of development. In some cases, it contributes to abnormal growth of the fetus in utero, other causes disease, which struck me. Apparently, the results are quite arbitrary.

I destroyed my notes and samples, including a giant rat, which is poisoned, and burned up in the hospital for cremation furnaces.

Here is my last request: I ask you to continue to keep my secret for as long as you see fit. However, if you hear that some experimenter went in my footsteps, please tell him that you learned.

Sincerely Abraham Trelawney

- It's amazing, Holmes! - I cried.

- Yes, Watson. The concept of invisible harmful effects horrifies. Let's hope that one day people will be able to subdue him and take control. Of course, the day will come not soon, so let's run the request hapless doctor Trelawny and will remain silent.

The case of the vanished gypsy

One summer day I was talking with Sherlock Holmes in our apartment on Baker Street. Looking out the window that opens onto the street, I noticed that the house arrived elegant carriage, drawn by two beautiful bays. The driver jumped down and helped get out the young lady, dressed in the latest fashion.

Sherlock Holmes raised his eyebrows:

- It seems that we deign to visit a noble lady, Watson. Hopefully, it will not matter a silly or trivial. It certainly was in a hurry to us from Hampstead.

- From Hampstead? - I repeated.

- I think so, - replied my friend. - Note the condition of the horse: they look tired, but they are not splashed with mud. Therefore, the crew did not leave the limits of London. However, the noble young ladies do not get up early, and therefore, the horse galloped several miles. The crew arrived on the north side, as well as the lady is clearly not poor - from the fashionable district. So this is Hampstead.

Soon after the visitor was carried out in our living room.

- Who are you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes? - She asked in a businesslike tone. If she was upset, it was able to control myself.

Holmes bowed.

- Do not sit down there, madam? - He suggested. - And, please, tell us what's bothering you.

- Thank you, sir, - she said, sitting down. - First of all, let me introduce myself. I Lady Arabella Midltorp daughter Lady Hedfort. My father, the Marquis Hedfort, died several years ago, as you may know, and I live with my mother in Hampstead. Unfortunately, right now the Marquis on the waters of Buxton, and I did not know who to turn to for advice. But then I thought about your reputation and immediately came here. The case concerns my young friend, a gypsy girl who disappeared most mysteriously. I'm afraid that does not happen something wrong with it, and would like to instruct you to look for her.

Holmes's face an expression of weariness, but his tone remained polite.

- Madam, - he said, - you will no doubt worry needlessly. Gypsies are quite capable of taking care of themselves and often experience a sudden need to leave this or that place.

- You do not take me seriously, - said the young lady with arrogance, which I found fascinating. - But I tell you that I know quite definitely that here it is filthy! I first met Isobel Lee three weeks ago. Her camp is located in the Hampstead heath not far from our house. She predicted the fate of the street, and as I know, that gypsy often clairvoyant, then asked me to tell fortunes on the arm. - Her voice dropped to a reverent whisper. - And I'll tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it was something supernatural: she knew the secrets of my past, which I have forgotten myself. She knew all about my position in society. She described a very true of my friends and acquaintances, but never seen them.

I said nothing, but thought it not too difficult to deceive the credulous, silly girl general statements and vague hints.

She meanwhile continued her story: - Isobel said she read my fate's hand. When she look at my hand as her eyes widened in horror. She warned me that the great danger that three reassert itself in the near future. Isobel urged to refrain from trips, fraught with disaster for me, in her opinion. Fortunately, when it was an amulet protecting from harm. She gave it to me and persistently asked to wear around the neck. - She raised her hands to her graceful neck and pulled a small silver charm on a thin chain.

I bent down to examine it. - Oh, John Cornwall, - I said, amused, noting that Sherlock Holmes deduced from itself such a waste of his time.

- Yes, sir. I paid her well, and always wear it as she asked. The next day I was riding my mare Betsy path through Hampstead Heath, when suddenly my horse stumbled and reared. I was afraid that she will throw me and I was very hurt himself. Unfortunately, it happened at the wrong place - there, where the path goes along the edge of a deep ravine. I would almost certainly cripple. But then I remembered about my amulet, and caught him, and the horse immediately came to her senses. All ended well, but you can imagine what I went through ...

At this point in her story expression Holmes' face changed.

- Interesting coincidence, - he said. - You used to go there on horseback?

- Oh, yes, Mr. Holmes. This is my favorite track. From there opens a wonderful view of the West End and the City, and I ride there two or three times a week.

- Clear. Please continue.

- As you know, I immediately come out and see Isobel. Fortunately, it is still to be found in the usual place, where she predicted the fate of passers-by and sold with clothespins tray for linen and other small items to support his family. I told her about the case, and it is a sigh of relief greeted me with a happy outcome. When I invited her for tea to his home, she kindly agreed. Again and again I thank her. Now that you have proof that Isobel clairvoyant, I asked to talk about the other dangers that lie in wait for me. She decided to tell fortunes on my tea thicker and asked me to pour the remnants of tea from a cup and saucer. Then she began to study drawing, the composition of the tea leaves. He says a lot to those who possess the gift of predicting the fate.

All this was said with complete conviction. I smiled: it was amusing to see how my friend raised his eyes to the ceiling.

- Tea leaves tell her, gentlemen, that soon I again expose the dangers. - She made a theatrical pause. - I threatened with attack! Naturally, I immediately vowed not to leave the door of his home, but advised against Isobel do so. What should happen, does not pass, she said. Destiny does not escape. However, she promised to protect me from harm. She took me to the amulet and clenched hands, whispered some words in their language. Then she returned to me the amulet, saying that endowed him with the ability to protect against evil, which can cause people.

A few days later I happened to return home alone with the High Street. I went on foot, so you go to my house was close. On the street I met a few people, because the time was coming to dinner, but I did not expect trouble. And then, when I turned the corner at Frogna, where, as you know, very little make out in any direction, to me shaky gait approached some rough unshaven guy. From anger written on his face, I ran cold on the skin. I do not doubt that it was my last hour, but then again remembered the amulet and, having broken his neck, he reached out to this man. I see you do not believe me, gentlemen, but here's the proof. As soon as the villain saw the amulet, he let out a hoarse cry, slipped and his legs ran away. Now, I never for a moment doubted the veracity of Isobel and its good location for me.

As you continue the story Holmes became more and more interested in appearance. I was also intrigued: how could a young gypsy predicted it all? Of course, the attack can be adjusted, although it is not clear that giving such a trick. But how could she know that a horse stumble? I leaned forward, trying not to miss a word.

- I came back to Isobel and gave her two gold sovereigns. A tidy sum, but, of course, my life is worth it. And, of course, I was eager to learn about the third danger and how to avoid it.

Isobel took a deck of Tarot cards, which, according to her, gave her great-grandmother, a famous gypsy soothsayer. She asked me to make a deck to my forehead, then a well-shuffled cards, and taking four, laid them on the tray design, known as the Celtic Cross. Then he offered to choose one. When I turned the first card, then nearly fainted: it was a skeleton, gentlemen, a symbol of death!

Lady Arabella gracefully tossed her head and took a deep breath at the memory.

- I was in despair and could not continue, but Isobel insisted, and I chose the second card. It was almost as terrible: it was the tower - the tower, split by lightning in the dark. Then I had the Empress Cups and finally the Moon.

Isobel explained their significance. Death means more danger. Tower - my own home. Empress was myself, and the moon indicates the time. She said she was in mortal danger looming over all of us who live in Hedfort Hall. While the moon was on the wane, and on Saturday, when it is all out of sight, in the house will die! Isobel did not know exactly who is going to die. It is very likely that it will be me, but perhaps one of the servants. I begged her again to take the amulet and give it protective qualities, but, according to her, it was impossible. When it comes to most of the goddess of the moon, is not affected by any spell. - I understand the essence of things - dry Holmes uttered. - So, you are, of course, left the house together with their families at night?

At Arabella's face stood out amazement.

- How did you hear about this? - She asked, then came to her senses and continued with a charming smile: - Oh, of course, what can I stupid! For such a great detective like you, this should be obvious.

- Please do not call yourself stupid, Madame, - said Holmes. - But go on. I understand that in your absence the house was mysteriously burgled?

The girl looked at him with a puzzled look, then laughed. - Oh, Mr. Holmes, what a cynic you are! I see, you think it was a trick designed to lure us out of the house at night. No, in fact, out of the house nothing was stolen. I rented a room in a local hotel for himself and those of the household who is required. Fortunately, the rooms needed a bit as part of the servants do not live in our house, and some are now in Buxton with my mother. Back at home the next morning, we found everything exactly in the same form as the left.

Naturally, the first thing I went to Isobel to thank, but to my surprise, it did not find anywhere else. The gypsy camp, no one knew where she was, and, apparently, no one is worried about her absence. Roma just shrugged their shoulders and said that, perhaps, she decided to leave. I was never able to get anything from them. It was very annoying. And they say that Gypsies mountain behind each other. I did not notice anything like that.

- So, madam, do you want us to find this girl?

- If at all possible, Mr. Holmes. For the cost, I do not fast. I'm not strapped for cash, and spend as much as necessary to bail out of the human disaster that saved my life three times.

- It does you honor, madam, - said Holmes. - Well, I think I'll take your case. He has interesting features. I would like to see the places where the events took place, and to

make the findings described by you. We can pay a visit to you, Lady Arabella, say, at ten-thirty in the morning?

The next day we were in Hedfort Hall. The young lady was waiting for us, dressed for a walk, and with it we went to Hampstead Heath. After going about three quarters of a mile, we found ourselves at the point where it almost threw the horse. Even I was clear on the dug earth, the horse bucked here.

- Do not you deign to move the two? - Holmes turned to us. - I would like to explore this place carefully.

Squatting down, he began to study the grass. Several times he raised from the ground some small items and put a couple of them in his pocket, discarding the rest. Finally Holmes stood up and returned to us.

- If you'll excuse us, Lady Arabella, - he said, - I would like to consult with a colleague. - He took me aside and, taking from his pocket some small mottled brown items showed them to me. - I believe that headway, Watson, - he said. - Take a look at this.

- It is the fruit of the horse chestnut, - I said. - The thing is usual for these places.

- Well, what do you, Watson, - reproached me my friend. - You see here nearby chestnut trees? For example, the fruits brought here boys who amuse themselves with a game of "chestnuts" [\[4\]](#) . But is it the fruit would not have rotted in this time of year? Study them carefully, you will see that these dried chestnuts by the fire or in the oven to make firmer.

- Clear! - I cried. - They were planted on the path to get the horse to stand on its hind legs!

- This is the obvious conclusion. Someone who knew about the habits of Lady Arabella scattered chestnuts shortly before its appearance, and in a place where the horse stumbled she would lose support.

- So it's gypsy tricks? - I suggested. - Who better knows the habits of horses? They have the knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

- Of course - she nodded Sherlock Holmes. - It is clear that Isobel Lee made sure that its predictions have come true. And yet we know that it has at least one accomplice. It was he who played the role of villain, who attacked Lady Arabella few days later. Maybe it's a brother or cousin Isobel. It was not difficult to arrange the scene. Maps fortuneteller undoubtedly rigged - for such it is a piece of cake.

We once again joined Lady Arabella, which took us back at the Hampstead heath and showed the place where she was threatened. We did not see there is nothing remarkable - just noticed that she was right, arguing that there was called a bad review. Holmes then asked if he could look at Hedfort Hall.

- At this time, I usually drink coffee, - said Lady Arabella, when we entered the house. - Will you join me, gentlemen? We could continue our conversation over coffee.

- With the greatest pleasure, - Holmes bowed.

We sat down in the morning room and began to talk about various trifles. Soon the maid brought in a tray laden with wonderful china, among which flaunted a silver coffeepot. When Lady Arabella poured over the coffee, Holmes continued her questioning.

- So, Lady Arabella, - he said, - I understand from your words that Isobel Lee visited the house only once.

- It is so, Mr. Holmes, - said the young lady. - I took her in this very room.

- You always stay here?

- No, sir. After guessing it very kindly offered to work around the house and to bless all the rooms. She casts a spell on the Roma language, which would have necessarily bring good luck.

- Clearly, - I mused my friend. - Maybe you do us a favor and spend us with Dr. Watson in the house? And recall exactly how it was last time.

- If you please, sir, - she said the girl, clearly surprised. - But I do not understand how it will help you in the investigation.

- And yet, madam, if you do me a favor, maybe I will be able to benefit from it some useful information. If you remember anything unusual, please immediately tell me about it.

When we finished our coffee, she showed us her home. All the rooms were beautifully furnished, though in a somewhat old-fashioned style. Probably hedged home for the wedding of her parents. Lady Arabella tried to remember the details, but apparently, Isobel Lee almost did not say anything - just read the spell.

Finally it came to a small room on the ground floor, comfortable, but clearly intended for employment matters.

- For what purpose are using this room? - Asked Sherlock Holmes.

- It's my mother's office - said Lady Arabella. - She spends the evening here for a book, and gives orders on the farm.

- What a beautiful desk! - I said Holmes, pointing to the piece of furniture standing near the wall and Crafted from mahogany in the Regency style.

- It's my mother's desk. She wrote letters for him.

Holmes looked at him closely. - Yes, I think this is the work of George Smith. It made probably seventy years ago.

- It is possible, sir, - said the girl. - I'm not very well versed in such matters.

- Smith skates, - continued my friend, - were hiding places. there is a secret compartment in this table?

- No, I know, - said Lady Arabella.

- Well, let's see - suggested Holmes, pulling from his pocket a tape measure.

The next few minutes, he in his characteristic manner bureau studied: the squat, the rose; I pull out the drawer and was measuring the width, length and height, muttering numbers. Finally, my friend made a triumphant exclamation and pulled out one of the four boxes. Fumbling in the resulting opening, he grabbed something, but the subject did not yield. A little thought, Holmes gently pushed one more box to the left of the first. Again stuck inside out and gently pulled, then he opened a drawer with the other hand. This time he was able to extract a small box, and he showed it to us.

- Well, ready - with a satisfied air said Holmes. - Sly trick worthy of Smith in his heyday. The cache is hidden behind the box, but you can get only slightly open adjacent boxes. Now let's see what we have here.

We huddled outside the box, which I, contrary to expectations, did not notice traces of dust. Apparently, Lady Hedfort often used a secret compartment. However, knowing the frivolity and loquacity daughter, she decided to share her secret.

Holmes pulled from a drawer a long, narrow box for jewelry.

- Emeralds! - Lady Arabella cried, clasping her hands.

Opening the case, Holmes has shown us that it is empty.

- Can you shed light on this, madam? - he asked.

- In this case, - hesitatingly, he uttered the girl - my mother kept the family emerald necklace, very valuable. My grandfather bought it many years ago, when he commanded a regiment in Egypt. Mom, of course, did not take their best decorations in Buxton: there are no social events worthy of emeralds.

- In that case, where do they usually store?

- I do not know - she murmured. - Maybe where you find a case.

- Apparently, the emeralds were stolen, - concluded my friend.

- Oh, no, this is terrible! - She exclaimed. - My mother is heartbroken and in all blame me! Oh, what a nasty, deceitful girl! How could I trust her?

- I'm afraid that your conclusion is correct, Madam, - said Holmes. - There is no doubt that Isobel Lee well versed in the recesses. She arranged so that all left the house and you can safely engage in the search.

- Oh, Mr. Holmes, - exclaimed the girl, - you must help me! Emeralds - part of my inheritance and my mother till the end of his life will not allow me to forget about my misconduct! Can not we do something?

Holmes frowned and replied with displeasure:

- I will not hide from you, madam, it will not be easy. Gypsy girl is not difficult to get lost in a crowded London and sell jewelry there.

To my chagrin, Lady Arabella wept. I tried to comfort her.

Holmes decided to continue the examination of the house, in spite of the deplorable state of Lady Arabella. In one of the rooms at the rear of the mansion, he pointed to the hanging

bolt window frame - it clearly broke down. Yes, gypsy, certainly had plenty of time to search every corner.

- But why did not she just cleaned the house? - I asked.

- You do not expect, Watson, that will take away the gypsy in his tent sheratonovsky buffet? The Roma faithful to the traditions: they prefer the valuable objects that are easy to conceal and easy to sell to the hand - the woodwork and all such. Jewelry - the most coveted prey for them, but they, of course, it is difficult to get.

After completing the examination, Holmes wanted to talk to the housekeeper, and we carried it into the room. This elderly lady, Mrs. Simpson, obviously had a great experience.

- Can I ask - my friend said after exchanging greetings - Do you know about the visit of a young gypsy girl in that time she had tea with Lady Arabella?

- I knew - the housekeeper said firmly, - and I can not say it came from this delight. Roma - fingered people. However, I have the right to dictate their masters, whom they take Hedfort Hall.

Holmes nodded, indicating that he understood her feelings.

- The Roma do not disdain small thefts, Mrs. Simpson. Did you notice something like that in this case?

Mrs. Simpson stood up with dignity.

- I Noticed, sir. After the visit a gypsy lost two teaspoons. Of course, I mentioned this to the lady Arabella, but she did not want to hear anything. I stated that I must have cheated.

- A few days later you think, asked to leave the house at night?

The grim face of Mrs. Simpson did not softened.

- Yes, sir, asked. I removed the "branch of ivy" in a hotel room not far from here. However, there was quite comfortable, but not as much as I used to. I had to share a room with Ellie, one of the maids.

- I see. And in return you have not noticed any missing?

- No, I did not notice - the housekeeper said with obvious regret. - Of course, I looked around the house - it's my duty - but everything was in order. No damage, though the circumstances look ... - she hesitated, searching for words - a few unusual.

Holmes had no more questions, and after a few words of thanks we retired to consult.

- She did not resist and stole teaspoons, Watson! It is in this direction and we will do the first step in our investigation. Remember silverware is brought when we were served coffee? No? It is decorated with the so-called royal pattern - highly refined drawing that with nothing can not be confused. And since he only appeared in this century, it is not as common as the more traditional patterns. I also looked at the stamp. The crown and the lion - is a brand of silversmiths from Sheffield. Their products are not so often found in London - here we were again lucky. I trust, Watson, that these teaspoons serve to expose Isobel Lee!

On the way back, when we said goodbye to the heartbroken Lady Arabella, my friend shared with me his thoughts:

- It is not entirely hopeless, Watson. Emeralds themselves are not needed gypsy. The stones need to pay in hard currency. Usually Roma are reluctant to deal with strangers as they call us. You'll never see a gypsy in a den of thieves. But in such cases as this, they have to look outside the fence of his tribe.

I must say that the number of subjects who are ready to give a reasonable price for such things is limited. And do not think that all of them are like Dickens's Fagin. No, it does not hang down individuals who live in a dirty hole and give a couple of coins stolen handkerchiefs and buckets of coal, stolen in the next street. The true aristocracy of the underworld will not have to deal with such rubbish. There are seemingly respectable owners of jewelry shops that are not averse to earn a lot of money by buying stolen goods on the cheap.

Gold and silver can be melted in a crucible. Precious stones - cut, faceted and re-insert a new frame, so that even the owner never let them know. And then sell without any risk to yourself, to make huge profits.

Harder is the case with ornaments that are considered works of jewelry art. Fence usually tries to quietly sell such a thing, even in this case, it is not particularly at risk. If it gets out, he will call the name and address of the person who allegedly sold him jewelry. When it became clear that the name and address of the fake, he will play the horror and despair,

and immediately returns the owner of stolen goods. The most important thing for him - a good name!

- And what about the emeralds? - I asked. - Their sawed?

- Hardly. Sawing they do not need, such as stones always give the traditional rectangular shape. However, it is possible that the stones removed from the necklace and put them into the rings or brooches. In this case, it would be impossible to prove that they belong to the owner.

We need to start looking for a Hatton Garden, the center of the trade with jewels. I think it went to Isobel Lee with his fairy tale about the emeralds. Our task - to read her thoughts as she reads our, and calculate the bench, she had chosen.

- But did she go there myself, Holmes? - I doubt. - Maybe she's commissioned a risky business to his brother or cousin?

- Maybe - said Holmes, - but I do not think so. Of course, the Roma trust their relatives, and we know that it has at least one accomplice. But in this case the production is so precious that Isobel is likely to not tell about it, even your family. And not because he is afraid of fraud. She just does not want to bother her family demands his share.

In addition, she has no idea that we took her trail, and will not rush to sell emeralds. When it comes to such amounts are slowly negotiations. I think we have a little time before the transaction is concluded. If we hurry, and we are lucky, we can hope for success.

We had a bite in Soho and went home. While we were resting, lounging in a chair and smoking, Holmes about something intently thinking. Finally, he spoke:

- I am afraid, Watson, we will have a tedious job. I usually give the police seized. However, our client does not want the matter to the standing became public, so we have to do the work themselves. So, Hatton Garden, Watson! Visit the most questionable jewelry shop and try something scout.

All scale enterprise awaits us, I realized only when the cab took us to Hatton Garden, and we went along this street.

- But, Holmes, - I could not stand it, - here more than a hundred stores and their surrounding streets, no doubt even more. We do not have time to check them all out!

- That's right, - has agreed to my friend - but I believe we can strike out from our list of most of the local institutions. In large stores, where many employees, no one dares to deal with dark deeds. Indeed, over time fans of easy money necessarily will lead to honest sellers clean water. We will go only to those shops where the counter is the owner and no one else.

In this approach, each of us left about two dozen stores. I took over the eastern part of the street, Holmes - west.

By accessing turns in small shops, I eventually got to the little shop on the corner of Greville Street. The atmosphere inside was quite unpresentable. Behind the counter was a master, and I turned to him with a well-learned by rote speech:

- I'm looking for a teaspoon with just such a pattern. - Then I showed him the spoon, which we borrowed in Hedfort Hall. - Our maid has lost one of the set. I would like to pick up a similar, and possibly with the same stigma.

The master bowed.

- Go see the true connoisseur, sir, - he said flatteringly. - You will look?

I handed him the spoon.

- I have a few spoonfuls of the royal pattern, sir, - he said, glancing at the stigma. - And if you were good enough to wait a few minutes, I'll see if there are any of them suitable.

Leaving me, he retired to the back of the shop and soon returned with a box of knives, spoons and forks. Having selected teaspoons, he laid them on the counter.

- That's all we have, sir. Now let's take a look at the stigma. - Inserting a magnifying glass eye, he lifted every spoonful to light. - Aha! - He said, sorting through a few. - Fortunately, I can help you, sir. That stigma of Sheffield with a crown, which you need. Compare this with your spoon. As like as two peas in a pod, is not it?

- Sure, - I agreed. - I immediately buy it.

- There is a second the same, sir, with the same stigma. Maybe you need a spare - just in case?

I thought about it and agreed, will be pleased to return to Lady Arabella at least part of its assets.

He wrapped a spoon, and I brought them in triumph Holmes.

- Excellent work, Watson! - Sherlock Holmes exclaimed, looking at the spoon so as not to attract attention. - I see them jeweler cleaned by removing the patina and partly stripping the soil of my reasoning. But the degree of wear of the same. Add to that the stigma that is rarely found in London. In addition, he found just two spoons with royal pattern. I think this is almost certainly the same store that chose Isobel Lee. We made a huge step forward: it will try to sell jewelry in the same place sold teaspoons.

- And she could not have done it?

- If so, it's simpler: we will notify the police, which would be enough reason to search the store. However, I believe that the transaction with these values require more time. So now we go to the other end: to track down the maid!

- Of course, it will not be easy? - I said doubtfully.

- Anyway, worth a try. You did not do me a favor by looking the morning on Baker Street? And since we do not rotate in the most refined circles, please, dress worse.

Appearing to Holmes on the next day after breakfast, I found that he made up as a gypsy. He painted his hair black and rubbed into the skin of the walnut juice to give it a dark color. In addition, he had not shaved, and the stubble on his chin got out. He was dressed appropriately, tied a red scarf around his neck. I put on an old suit and cloth cap, which he put on before going to accompany Holmes in the London slums.

- I hope my masquerade looks convincing, Watson? - He asked cheerfully. - In the end, transformed it was not too difficult. If you're ready, let's hire a cab and see if I can pass for his among the Roma.

Once you reach Fleet Street, we released a cab and headed on foot to the south, towards the river. On the way, Holmes explained to me his train of thought:

- Isobel Lee hiding, but shelter it should be not too far from the shops of the buyer. In my opinion, this means that she had to settle in Southwark, where strangers do not ask too many questions, and where cheap housing. I guess we will not be hard to find someone who knows her.

I looked at him doubtfully:

- But if we direct inquiries about her, except rumors about it will not reach the girl?

- You are right, Watson. That's why we do not ask questions, and to ask her something to convey. Fortunately, I speak a little gypsy - learned it at an early age, when wandering for some time with a traveling circus. In England, the language is very primitive. In the course of about three thousand words. Quite small in comparison with a pure gypsy dialects of Central Europe.

We crossed the bridge Blackfriars and immediately found ourselves among the slum. It has not been repaired smoky building. Many windows were broken and roughly patched with boards or sheet metal. From somewhere came the sickening odor of tanneries.

We walked slowly, depicting artisans who lost their jobs. Several times we came across to meet people who looked like gypsies, and then Holmes approached him and addressed in Romani:

- Greetings, brother. Do you have a girl named Isobel Lee know who moved here recently?

One at a loss shook his head. The two said: "No, brother," but four of those to whom we turned, a young handsome man with a gold ring in his ear, said: - I know, brother.

- I have important news for her - said my friend.

- What's the news?

- Price satisfied. It must come to the pub "Mitra" tonight at ten o'clock.

- I'll tell her.

Holmes handed gypsy small coin, which he accepted with a nod in acknowledgment.

- Another point, the last step, Watson, and our trap is ready. Let's go back to Hatton Garden.

We crossed the bridge over the river and came to Hatton Garden - it took us no more than twenty minutes. I have Holmes shop where you purchased the spoon, trying to stay away from the windows. My friend went to the store and returned a few minutes later.

- And now, in Baker Street, Watson, - he said. - I just said the owner of the shop, that "the lady with emeralds" wanted to talk to him, "Mitra" - this is the nearest pub, suitable for our purposes - at ten o'clock in the evening. He showed no surprise. I think he will come back: for the sake of jewelry and you can walk. And if Isobel Lee to come our message, there is no doubt that she will take with him the emeralds. Now we just have to prepare for a meeting with her. I have to send a telegram.

On Baker Street we had a surprise: we paid a visit to Lady Arabella. Mrs. Hudson, who came to the delight of the opportunity to talk with members of the aristocracy, it took a conversation over tea in her living room. Lady Arabella at first taken aback at the sight of our masquerade, but woke up when Holmes turned to her with a bow:

- We are engaged in your business, madam, and believe that we have achieved considerable success.

- Oh, Mr. Holmes, I pray that you all did it! Please forgive me for intruding, but I could not find a place of anxiety!

- I quite understand, Madam, - said Holmes. - Perhaps we will be able to return emeralds tonight. We have taken something, and we hope that as a result of our efforts Isobel Lee will appear at the appointed place.

- Oh, Mr. Holmes! - Cried the Lady Arabella.

Sherlock Holmes said to her bow.

- Perhaps, Lady Arabella, you will be interested to go there with us tonight? - He asked. - It is not essential, but if you have identified the girl, we would have won a time when every minute counts.

- I'll be happy to accompany you!

— Then can I ask you to come here at nine o'clock in the evening, dressed in a dress of one of your maids?

- Of course. I will not keep you from your work and come back in the evening. - And, politely thanking Mrs Hudson for the reception, she retired.

- And now, Watson, I'll shave and change clothes, then I need to send a telegram to my friend in the police Cambridgeshire.

- Cambridgeshire? - I asked in disbelief.

- Yes, - Holmes confirmed. - By virtue of a delightful quirk of English law "Mitra" is entrusted to the county because its building once belonged to the Bishop of Ely. We can not do without the help of the police to arrest the criminal, and present her allegations, but the London cops too impulsive and self-confident. I find it easier to deal with the rural police officers.

By nine o'clock all were assembled. From Cambridge arrived Sergeant Cole. At the request of Holmes, he was in civilian clothes: it was a dapper tweed suit - though for my taste, a little rural species. However, there is no doubt that it will be inconspicuous in the crowd. It was a cautious and phlegmatic man with overbearing manner. Lady Arabella dressed in a blue dress and slipped on her head a large shawl.

Long before ten o'clock, we were seated in the "Mitre", sitting at a table near the door, so that if necessary, block the exit from the hall. Holmes and Lady Arabella sat facing the door, ready to send a signal when a gypsy or a jeweler. We Sergeant Cole settled down in front of them.

We waited for about twenty minutes, talking quietly, when Holmes nodded slightly to let them know that there was shop owner - ten minutes before the appointed time. I carefully looked over his shoulder and saw that the jeweler is at the bar, sipping a restless kind of light beer. The time has passed for ten hours. I was afraid that she can not come: what if it did not receive a message or suspect a trap?

But I should not have worried. Soon Lady Arabella quickly bowed her head covered with a shawl, and touched the hands of Holmes. I saw several men turned their heads at the bar in the direction of the newly arrived, and ventured to raise his eyes when held by a young gypsy woman with striking good looks. She was tall and beautiful, some wild beauty. In the hands of the girl was nothing, and I have not noticed a purse on the belt. I assumed that her neck lace, to which is attached a bag. Isobel looked around the men drank at the bar, and noticing the jewelry shop owner, took a step toward him.

Holmes rose, and we are all the same.

- Please, stay where you are, Lady Arabella - I asked my friend. - And we come to this couple.

The bar events unfolded rapidly. The two exchanged a few words and with suspicion looked at each other, to find that their stories do not match. They instinctively looked

around the room: a man - a frightened, gypsy - angrily. I'm afraid they noticed my gaze. She responded with the speed inherent in her family, and I rushed to the door. As she passed Holmes, my friend grabbed her right arm. Reaching into the cut of her skirt, he pulled out a leather pouch from a secret pocket, which is usually the case with thieves. Gypsy screamed with rage and tried to snatch the bag, but Holmes gripped him, raised above his head.

Sergeant Cole approached more gradually, and turned to the girl:

- I'm a police officer, ma'am, and I have to ask you for ...

He failed to finish: the gypsy snatched from somewhere hatpin probably stockpiled for such cases, and stabbed the policeman in the forearm. With a cry, he stepped back, and the girl was pulled out of Holmes' hands and rushed to the opposite door, which led into another room. I chased a gypsy, but it made its way through the crowd so quickly that I did not keep up with her. However, I could tell about her movements on the angry exclamations: because of her man spilled his beer. By the time we got to the street, she had rushed down the narrow alley that leads to the Place Or, and when we reached the dimly lit streets of this, the girl was gone. I went back to the pub, where Sergeant sternly questioned the shopkeeper. When I appeared last threw in my direction glare. Obviously, he recognized me and came to the conclusion that I had a hand in this case.

- How was I to know she was a thief? - Angrily he asked the policeman. - She said that she got the emeralds from the great-grandmother. How was I to know that they are stolen?

- Do not take my head off, buddy, - said the sergeant. - Her grandmother, well, wow!

- I tell you, I did not know!

They bickered a few minutes, and finally surrendered to police.

- I can not help it, ladies and gentlemen, if he insists on its history - confessed to Sgt. - We have no evidence and very little evidence. I'll take it in Holborn station, where I was kindly allowed to work, and there we will set the heat to it. One to if he does not crack - and I think the hope for is no - we will not be able to arrest him.

- It does not matter sergeant - calmly said Sherlock Holmes. - We can congratulate ourselves at least a partial success. Police now known another fence, so that nothing prevents it to establish surveillance of him and his visitors. And my client returned the necklace, and, in addition, she received a good lesson, I hope, will do her good. As for you,

Watson, is to ask you to keep a secret. To what Marquise know how close she was to losing its most precious jewels!

The case of the Amazon explorer

Going once to Baker Street, I found Holmes for a conversation with an elderly gentleman of venerable appearance.

- Good morning, Watson! - Exclaimed my friend. - Meet with Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

I bowed respectfully, knowing that this name belongs to one of the most eminent scientists of our country. Sir Joseph nodded in response, having taken me a suspicious look.

- I hope this matter will not become the property of many people, - he said, displeased. - Just because I came to you, I can not risk it, dedicating the police at all the facts.

- You have nothing to be afraid of, Sir Joseph - reassured Holmes. - Watson - my permanent assistant. He often wrote fascinating stories about our exploits, but this time it would not do at my request.

- Of course, - I confirmed immediately. - Many cases of Sherlock Holmes require secrecy, and I do not write about them.

Apparently Sir Joseph softened. He explained to me:

- As already known Mr. Holmes, I am here in connection with the recent death of John Anderson, the famous explorer of South America. He was doing a lot of work for the Kew Gardens in South America and in our country. There are certain circumstances connected with his death, which I would like to investigate strictly confidential.

- I saw the announcement of his death in the papers two days ago - interjected Holmes. - There are only talking about the accident in his estate, without further details.

- It was a very strange accident, Mr. Holmes: John Anderson was found dead in his greenhouse. The immediate cause of death was loss of blood.

- He cut himself badly?

- No. I said that this happened under rather strange circumstances. Many giant Amazonian leech, which he bred in the greenhouse for scientific purposes, stuck to him and drank so much blood that it killed him.

- Good God! - I cried. - For what purpose it is needed to breed leeches of this size and in such numbers?

- Anderson was a man of science - reproachfully said Sir Joseph. - For his research he wanted to recreate as closely as possible the conditions of the rainforest in the Amazon basin. He brought back the most common Amazonian insects like flying and crawling, and in addition, lizards and other small creatures that feed on insects, and when they die, then are eaten by insects; and more - plants and fungi that area, which will ultimately provide humus. Over the years, he has brought in a greenhouse over three hundred species of flora and fauna of the rainforest. In a sense, it is a living laboratory.

- I Begin to understand - I said. - It was a wonderful and ambitious experiment. But, of course, the death of the reasons you described is very unusual! When I was in Netley special course for military surgeons, we studied tropical diseases and parasites. As we said, the leeches are not a threat to the life of an adult.

- In general, it is true - Sir Joseph nodded. - However, according to documentary evidence, the people who drink the water near the spot where leeches live, found dead the next morning. But, in fact, leeches can be seen immediately, and can be easily removed with a salt or hot coals.

- And if there is evidence that he was drunk or took drugs? - Holmes asked.

- I can not say with absolute certainty, because only I know what I told his wife and servants. However, I can assure you that it was absolutely not in the habit of Anderson. I've known him for many years and I know that he drank very sparingly, and only wine, but did not take the drug ever.

- It definitely was one in a greenhouse?

- Yes. The door was locked from the inside, and his assistant had to break the glass to get inside.

Holmes folded fingers "house."

- It's really weird incident, Sir Joseph. However, it can be assumed dizzy, faint, or something like that - in such a case, the person is defenseless. What prompted you to consult with me, not with the doctor?

At this point Sir Joseph clearly felt uncomfortable.

- The police has already come to the same conclusion that you, Mr. Holmes. They found that Anderson contracted malaria during his travels. According to them, the disease has caused fainting, which made him a helpless victim of leeches. Of course, will be an inquiry, but as there are no signs of penetration from the outside and the door was locked from the inside, the jury coroner certainly will make a formal verdict of accidental death, and the police would not search for the attacker. I must admit that the police's arguments convincing, and yet there are certain circumstances, due to which I would like to have this death was investigated more thoroughly.

- And what are they? - Quietly I asked Holmes, as Sir Joseph paused.

After some hesitation, Sir Joseph continued:

- As you know, gentlemen, about twenty years ago, Brazil held the monopoly on rubber production. It was the most profitable item in their budget, and they were determined to no one to share. All attempts to take out the seeds of rubber trees or shoots severely punished. Then, in thousand eight hundred seventy-sixth year, it was reported that a young adventurer Henry Wickham smuggled several thousand seeds of rubber trees and brought them to us, in Kew Gardens. We were able to germinate, many of them, and now Britain has extensive rubber plantations in their tropical colonies, to the great benefit of the Empire.

- I remember reading about the heroism of Wickham - I interrupted eagerly. - Great story of British courage and resourcefulness!

Sir Joseph looked at me coldly:

- Really, it's a very common belief. However, in reality the seeds procured by John Anderson and smuggled out of the country, hidden among other types of seeds - thus he was able to outsmart the Brazilian customs. But he could not divulge his role in this matter, so as always would have lost the opportunity to return to the Amazon and his life's work would remain unfinished. Our Consul found a young Wickham, whose family sent in Santarem, in the upper reaches of the Amazon. For a certain amount he agreed to assume the role of a man vyvezshego seeds. He was boastful small and could do yourself

advertising, so that, perhaps, in the end, and he believed in it. Perhaps it has gone too far when Wickham was elevated to the dignity of knighthood for his feat.

- Clearly, - said Holmes thoughtfully. - What do you think, could not it come out? What, if any, or the Brazilian patriot ruined planter desired to kill Mr. Anderson?

- I think it's quite possible.

- But what benefit it could bring? In addition, so many years, and the wound healed.

- Those in whose veins flows the hot Latin blood, care little benefit or prescription of years, when it comes to credit. It not infrequently happens that a man all his life waiting for the opportunity to get even.

- But you have not told this story to the police?

- I could not, Mr. Holmes, could not. Legend of Wickham is so widely spread that we would be branded as liars. In addition, it would be aware that the Queen has erected knighted man quite unworthy of this honor. So I came here secretly. I told my staff that I was going to the city to pay a visit to the Royal Society ^[5] in connection with the duties of its president.

Holmes leaned back in his chair.

- For many months, I did not come across such a delightful task, Sir Joseph. Thank you for coming with her to me. I am happy to undertake this business, and tomorrow we Watson visit the place where the tragedy occurred. I will appreciate if you supply me a letter of recommendation to Mrs. Anderson, presenting, say, a specialist in tropical diseases.

Sir Joseph immediately wrote this letter, sitting at his desk Holmes, then he stood up and bowed to both of us.

- I'll look forward to your report, Mr. Holmes, when you will have some information, - he said and left.

The next day I arrived at the request of Holmes's Baker Street early in the morning. Since the weather was beautiful, we did not take a cab, and walked a mile to Paddington Station. There we boarded a train that brought us to the station Kew Gardens, near which was the estate of Anderson.

We easily found his home. He was small, although, of course, large enough for a childless couple. The extensive gardens down to the river. At the door we called our names and gave a letter of recommendation. Soon the maid took us to his mistress.

Mrs. Anderson stood up when we entered the room. She was a tall, stately woman with typical Iberian features. The first view suggests that in her youth she certainly had a reputation for the standard of the Latin beauty. However, this blessed time of her passed not so long ago: it was certainly much younger than Anderson, whose age at death was approaching sixty. Of course, she mourned for her husband. However, her black dress was decorated with lots of frills and ruches, rejected the strict English style. We took turns bending over the hand hostess when she greeted us.

- Good morning, gentlemen, - she said. - Please sit down. As I understand it, you're here to investigate the death of my poor husband. - She spoke with a slight accent.

- Yes, it is, ma'am, - Holmes confirmed. - We are very saddened by the fact that they have to bother you at such a sad time, but you must understand that an investigation should be started without losing time.

Mrs. Anderson shrugged:

- I do not understand what's investigate. Recently, my dear husband had fits of dizziness, although he refused to address to the doctor. He said that this is just a consequence of long-standing malaria and took quinine. I have no doubt that he fainted when he was alone, and he was killed by these disgusting creatures.

Holmes nodded in agreement:

- Almost certainly it was, madam, but, of course, in such cases we must follow certain regulations.

- Of course. How can I help you?

- You were talking about malaria. He was in poor health?

She shrugged again:

- Caucasian highly vulnerable in my country, Mr. Holmes. Everywhere he faces illness. Malaria, yellow fever, dysentery, cholera - all of them thrive in hot climates. Mr. Anderson spent a long time in the Amazon. I first met him in Manaus, where my father was a

government official. John came to him for some papers. In this city, he fell ill with fever. I nursed him as a nurse, with the help of one of my servants, and we fell in love, though he was much older than me. After a while we got married, and he brought me to London. Since then there have been other visits to Brazil, and new diseases. Yes, his health is poor.

Here I could not help asking:

- I hope you have friends and relatives to whom you could ask for help, Mrs. Anderson? Widow is very difficult to be alone in such circumstances.

Mrs. Anderson made a negative gesture:

- I'm in this country very few friends and no relatives. When everything is settled, I will return to my people. I'm tired of this cold and wet city from people who feel differently than we do. I miss the holidays, dance, sincere friendship - all that is in my country.

She pointed to a large tapestry, immediately attracts attention. On it with great skill tropical jungles were painted: thick foliage was full of lots of bright colors, parrot sat on a branch of bush peeking jaguar. Tapestry hit the exuberant, untamed beauty of which was a little uncomfortable to me. Mrs. Anderson for some time silently contemplated it.

- I wove the tapestry itself, gentlemen, and I love to look at him. It reminds me of the homeland, and then I'm sad, because that separated from her.

- You never accompanied her husband in his Brazilian expeditions? - Asked Holmes.

- No, it's very far. I do not like sea travel and did not share her husband's interests, which is viewed with admiration even to beasts, reptiles in mud. And in the end they killed him - him, who treated them as pets.

- Can we take a look at his office?

- Of course.

She got up and took us to the next room, furnished as an office and a library. Books on all aspects of the natural history of the series were on the shelves. On the walls hung souvenirs, mostly Native American artifacts. We present here and samples of art of taxidermy: I learned a tapir and anteater - the last by a long proboscis. The room was neat. Obviously, unlike many scholars differed Anderson accuracy and scattered papers. At the

corner of his desk was a large cabinet photograph of his wife as a young man, on the other - the pair shot toned men in gold-embroidered uniform with epaulettes.

- Who is it? - Holmes asked, pointing to the last photo.

Mrs. Anderson raised an eyebrow:

- It is a former Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro. He was friends with my husband in his early years. The Emperor always wanted to see Amazon open for trading.

- It is no longer ruling the country?

- No, he was overthrown by the army ^[6]. In my opinion, he is currently living in Portugal.

- You are a supporter of the emperor, sorry for the question? She shrugged again:

- I am a woman. I am not interested in politics, and I would not vote, even if they had the right. My husband stuck to certain political views, though not very clear.

- Clearly, - Holmes muttered. - Perhaps we might now look at the scene of the tragedy?

- As you please. I will not go with you. I can not bear to think about this place. I'll have to take down the greenhouse as soon as the investigation is completed.

She rang the bell. Maid came who curtsied.

- Mary, take these gentlemen to Mr. Doggett and ask him to give them any assistance that is required, - ordered the hostess.

We conducted a small close working room in the back of the house and presented Doggett, who introduced himself as an assistant Anderson, thus, that first raised the alarm. It was a very energetic young man.

After some preliminary questions we asked to take us to the place where he found the body. Doggett took us to the bottom of the garden, which was located near the river. There we saw a very large greenhouse - solid construction with glazed wooden frame, painted in white and devoid of any architectural decorations.

I noticed that from the river to the greenhouse they brought a small canal, lined with stone. He entered into one of the walls and out the other side. It overlooks the beautiful little island in the middle of the Thames Oliver.

- This is our terrarium, as we call it, gentlemen - said Doggett. - Mr. Anderson wanted to recreate as closely as possible in terms of its Amazon basin. Did you know that he maintained close contacts with the Kew Gardens and spent a lot of time at the Palm Pavilion ^[7], studying its structure and methods of heating. This door - the only entrance.

Mr. Doggett unlocked the door with his key. When we walked into the conservatory, Holmes examined the lock of simple construction. Just outside the door was a wooden desk and some shelves with a variety of equipment and bottles of chemicals. Hooks on the wall and a pair of boots left at the table, showed that there are usually dressed. And then the wall rose the jungle. Near heat emitted huge black iron stove. We immediately felt the heat emanating from her, and humidity.

- This oven is heated constantly, gentlemen, - explained Doggett. - However, it is so much that I put the fuel in it only twice a day: in the morning and late afternoon. During the night we descend in it the heat. The furnace is used to heat the air and water in the coils located at the rear.

He led us along a narrow path through the undergrowth, and after a few yards, we found ourselves in a large pond surrounded by tropical plants unknown to me with dense foliage. I heard but did not see the small animals, the bustle of the thicket. Many insects hummed and buzzed around some reaches two inches in length. Some sat on the establishment of me attracted sweat, and I instinctively threw it. Little frog in a bright black and yellow stripes abruptly jumped from rotten logs, when we approached the water's edge.

- That's where I found Mr. Anderson - Doggett said. - He was lying under that bush, and his legs were in the pond. A terrible sight: it stuck leeches, red, swollen with blood. Several of these creatures cling to the naked neck, forming a kind of pagan necklaces. I immediately dragged the body to the entrance and ran for help. Taking the kitchen salt, I got rid of the leeches, but alas, too late.

- And at what time it was? - Holmes asked.

- About seven o'clock in the evening, when I came to light the stove. Mr. Anderson used to come in the terrarium disappeared after lunch and there until the evening. So, I believe that he has lain here for about five hours. When I walked up to the greenhouse door was locked, but I saw through the glazed frames, the key sticking in the lock, and realized that

the owner inside. I called out and knocked on the glass, but there was no answer. Suspecting an accident, I broke the glass in the door and took the key.

Holmes nodded and asked the following question:

- Mr. Anderson has always worked alone?

- He preferred to work alone, sir. He said that it came from his habit during his stay in the Amazon. And he locked the door - to be sure that it will not interfere, and that pets do not enter here without an escort.

- Do you happen to know - asked Sherlock Holmes, - the extent to which the Royal Botanic Garden is involved in these experiments?

- Mr. Anderson worked closely with Kew - hurriedly said Doggett - but was completely independent from them. He financed all their expedition and deciding which areas to explore. We can say that these surveys were his ardent passion, or, more precisely, his life's work. He often told me that he considers himself a happy man, because it has the means, absorbing it all entirely to indulge their scientific interests.

- So, he was a rich man?

- I would not say that, sir. The house is furnished without luxuries and entertainment on the money spent is very small. But, on the other hand, it has a large staff of servants. In addition, every year large sums went on long expeditions in South America.

Holmes nodded and remained silent for some time. Looking at the pond at our feet, I noticed in the dark water among seaweed wreath floated a little silver, yellow-bellied fish. Suddenly, she rushed forward and opened her mouth, as if chasing some unseen prey to me. I saw terrible teeth, and realized that it was the famous piranha.

With concern looking around, I noticed the creation of cadaveric color, like a sluggish earthworm. It hung from the bush, half-hidden foliage. It must be one of the leeches rob Anderson's life, I thought. Having a closer look, I noticed two more vile creatures and shuddered at the thought that there are teeming everywhere dangerous hungry predators.

With Doggett, we examined the whole terrarium. Fortunately, along all the walls were lined with the tracks needed for the care of the greenhouse. Holmes studied particularly closely openings through which water is supplied to the greenhouse and flowed out of it,

but even to me it was clear that they are too narrow. And in any case, on the ground next show no traces that would certainly have stayed here if it infiltrated a man.

We went back to the entrance, and Holmes again carefully examined the floor. Suddenly, he raised his eyebrows and thrusting his hand into a dark corner, took out the corpse of a small frog, black and yellow - like the one I saw earlier.

- What is it? - Asked Holmes, showing a dead frog Doggett.

- *Of Rana palmipes* , - said Doggett. - Amazon river frog. They are very common in the Amazon. Well multiply under these conditions. They feed on snakes and larger animals.

- Clearly, - Holmes muttered. - But why is her body turned out to be so far from the thicket?

Doggett confused.

- I really do not know, sir. Maybe she was ill and crept away to die here.

- Sure, it explains everything - my friend agreed, throwing in a little body thickets. - I hope - he continued - you do not mind that I took a few leeches to the study?

- I am sure that there can be no objection, sir. Mrs. Anderson had already told me that is going to carry the cage, and I think all copies would be destroyed. It is a pity: it would put an end to the noble experiment. One moment, I'll give you them for any bag.

Doggett short time we left and returned with a small bag of coconut fiber. Going to the pond, he deftly filled a bag of seaweed.

- Well, sir, so they will remain alive for at least one day, if you moisten the seaweed.

Holmes thanked him for his work, and together we chose half a dozen leeches.

Returning to the house to say goodbye to Mrs. Anderson, we found her in the society swarthy young man. He stood up and bowed with a smile, showing a very large white teeth. Mrs. Anderson also rose.

- Gentlemen, - she said - let me introduce you to Senor Fernando Gomes, Attaché of the Brazilian Embassy and a family friend.

- I am honored to meet you, sir Gomes - kindly spoke to him Holmes. - Perhaps you shared an interest in botany Mr. Anderson?

Gomes said with a smile:

- Oh, no, sir. I'm just a diplomat and not have the talent to science. I am a commercial attache. My main concern - trade between our two great countries. There are many possibilities of changing solid wood and other raw materials to British manufactured goods. It is this exchange, I try to encourage by facilitating contacts between merchants, providing interpreters for negotiations and stuff like that. However, I am here today on behalf of His Excellency the Ambassador. He asked me to pass on that sad demise of Mr. Anderson, and to express condolences to his widow.

After exchanging a few more pleasantries and thanked Mrs. Anderson for assistance, we went to the station.

- Well, Holmes, what do you think about this? - I asked, as soon as we moved to a safe distance.

- Nothing, Watson. Of course, it's an amazing challenge, but not being familiar with the history of the issue, I can not act. I feel that my knowledge about Brazil regrettable scarce, so I'll have to spend some time for books.

We took the train and all the way to Baker Street and not exchanged ten sentences. That evening Holmes was a lousy conversationalist, and I smoked in a chair, watching as he takes off from the shelves of one book after another: parliamentary reports, directories, geographic atlas and the like. Some of them looked through it briefly, others read carefully, making detailed notes. When in the evening I went to bed, he was still immersed in his studies.

Waking up the next day, I saw that Sherlock Holmes was gone. I had breakfast alone and waited for news. Shortly before noon, a boy gave me a message: Holmes asked to meet him at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Arriving there, I immediately went to the laboratory, where he spent many of his studies. To my horror, I saw that he was sitting on a low stool, naked to the waist, and in his hand a few small leeches that have turned red with blood. Beside him was a basin of water in which floated a dozen of these disgusting creatures, including a couple of large bloodsuckers, taken from Holmes greenhouse.

- I understand that you are studying the behavior of leeches? - I inquired.

- Yes, Watson, - said Holmes. - Here we have a European medicinal leech, of *Hirudo medicinalis*, which, of course, much inferior to the size of its Amazonian relatives - they can grow to a length of eighteen inches. However, all the basic features they are the same. I learn how it sticks to the victim. First, it establishes a back suction cup on the skin located on the end of the tail, and then turns to the skin applies suction cup front finally damage the skin and starts sucking. Suck, as they say, to dump on that of the European leech out twenty minutes, and in the Amazon - about forty, she disappears.

Having examined with a magnifying glass sores on the skin and the mouth of these creatures, I found that they have three jaws with many small teeth that leave a characteristic three-beam damage resembling the letter «Y».

Apparently, in their saliva contains substances which blunts the sensitivity of nerve endings, blood vessels expand victim to increase blood flow, and prevent blood clotting. Truly wonderful creation!

- Of course, it is a master in their field, - I said dryly. - I know the old doctors, who in the past used cupping in the treatment of liver and kidney. However, the theory of "vital juices" has long been a fiasco ^[8].

- I will post the results of their study, Dr. Cronin, who conducts an autopsy of the body of John Anderson. I hope, then he will be able to say with confidence which of the wounds on the body left leeches.

I also checked out one important point, applying leeches to different objects. They do not want or can not possibly drink the blood of the dead. Therefore, it is obvious that Anderson for a while he was alive - about an hour, judging by how leeches are bloodshot. This eliminates the release of heart attack or sudden death for some other reason.

I waited for Holmes imposed ointment and a plaster on the wound.

- If you are free, Watson, I invite you to have a meal in Soho. I have found that there is, in a restaurant, sometimes there is a group of people that may interest you.

We went in a cab on Wardour Street, where Holmes told to the driver to stop near a small restaurant, quite unpresentable in appearance. Inside, it was dark, and furnishings consisted of bulky tables and mahogany chairs. The owner, apparently waiting Holmes led us to the only occupied table.

As we approached, the two men - judging by appearances, Hispanics - rose and bowed to us. Holmes introduced them: tall and thin grim subject was called Pedro Funari, a friend of his, stout, lower growth, bore the name of Antônio de Moura. Both were dark-skinned and bearded.

- Mr. Holmes, Dr. Watson - appealed to us to de Moura - thank you for coming.

- Gentlemen, - politely said Holmes, - I thank you for what you have honored me confidence. I hope we will be able to exchange information to our mutual satisfaction. Let me introduce you to Dr. Watson. Watson, these gentlemen belong to the Brazilian royalist party in exile.

I bowed, and we all sat down at the table.

- Let's reinforce, before we talk about our business - suggested Holmes. - I can not wait to taste the delights of your homeland.

They served dishes that were quite tasty. However, some of the dishes were too sharp for the British taste, but I had a chance in the past to meet with exotic cuisine, so I found the food quite acceptable. During the meal we drank Portuguese wine.

After lunch, the owner brought us a thin black cigar, very corrosive. When we relaxed for brandy de Moura told about the purpose of his political clique.

- We are loyal to His Majesty Don Pedro, the rightful ruler of Brazil. In the eight hundred and eighty-nine one thousand, the army forced him to abdicate. The church has also been set up against him, because he put his corrupt bishops, who lived at the expense of the poor. John Anderson supported the emperor, whom he met a few years before these events, becoming a friend of his Imperial Majesty. He was one of those who has attracted the Emperor's attention to the suffering of the people.

After the overthrow of Don Pedro Anderson joined our party. During his travels, he stopped at the port of Belém and Manaus, where his wife's family lived. There he always met with Emperor followers. He drove back and forth messages, money and a fair supply of food. We fear that it opened and the army had sent to his assassin.

- You do not know who would have to give him up? - Holmes asked.

De Moura shook his head sadly:

- I do not know, sir. I can not believe that it was one of ours. All we keep our commitment to the cause until his death. Maybe he made a mistake, or one of his messages intercepted. I can only guess.

We sat in a little restaurant. Holmes asked questions and took notes in a notebook, noting movement Anderson. Brazilians told not too much: they clearly did not want to dwell on their deeds. They could understand. The Brazilian government would not hesitate to executed or imprisoned anyone who conducted subversive activities against the state.

Finally we departed. In parting, Holmes promised by the owner of the restaurant inform our interlocutors of any changes in the business.

- Do you know what is most interesting, Watson? - Remarked Sherlock Holmes, as we walked through Soho, heading home. - Because Mrs. Anderson should be aware of: as frequent absences never go unnoticed for a wife. Yet she chose to keep silent about the political views of a spouse.

- Maybe she protected his name? - I suggested.

- Why would - in the present state of things? He is dead, and no Englishman would not think of it is bad because of the fact that he helped foreign nationals monarch to restore him to the throne. No, she wanted to conceal from us this information for any other reason. And the reason for this, of course, is related to how he died, but not with the fact of his death.

A few days later, I was again summoned to Sherlock Holmes. When I entered, he intently studied some paper impressive volume.

- Autopsy results, Watson, - he explained. - Dr. Cronin has kindly agreed to introduce me to his opinion before it will be officially announced at the inquest. The immediate cause of death was loss of blood. There were also problems with breathing, since the oxygen was removed from the blood. At autopsy found no signs of acute heart attack or stroke. However, the damage to his face, received before his death show that he could not stay on his feet as if he was suddenly paralyzed.

- This is not a typical malaria attack - I commented. - Usually the patient feels dizzy and dizziness and sits or lies down before his overthrow fever.

Holmes read on:

- Lists all minor damage: affected not only the face but also my hands - they found scratches. There is a fresh bruise on his hip and puncture marks on the sole of his left foot.

He put the paper aside and sat down, puffing at his pipe. Some time passed, and Holmes spoke again:

- I think we need to go back to the scene, Watson. I urgent need to do something than I thoughtlessly neglected before.

And here again we take the train to Kew Gardens station. Shaking hands with Mrs. Anderson, who clearly was delighted by the fact that once again sees us, we went to Daugherty in the terrarium. When we were alone with Holmes, he searched the floor at the entrance, paying special attention to the space around your desktop. Finally he said:

- This is it, Watson! As I expected ...

And he's very careful with his fingertips pulled from the corner behind the table some small ball. Holmes held it away from me, but I saw that it was two long, intertwined thorns.

- They look ominous, - I said doubtfully. - I do not whether it spikes of plants that we have seen here?

- Oh sure. However, look at these spikes! For God's sake, be careful!

Looking closer, I saw the thorns some dark matter.

- You suspect poison? - I asked.

- Poison, Watson, which causes loss of control of the muscles, but not instant death. In conjunction with the Amazon jungle is not you say anything?

- Curare!

- That's right, curare. Even a century ago, it was used the South American Indians. It is prepared from the bark chilibuha: it cook a few days, until you get a thick dark mass containing a large amount of strychnine. Because it affects the body, when only enters the bloodstream, they smeared arrowheads, and in this case - the spines. It is important to calculate the dose depending on the size of the victim: the bird will die in a minute, small mammals - in ten minutes, and such a large creature, like a man - twenty minutes. Remember the dead frog that I found, Watson. To test the effect of the poison, the Indians

inject poison arrow frog, and then count the number of jumps, which it can do before you die. I believe that the frog was the victim of such an experience.

Note also that the spines crushed. They are planted in the boots to Anderson. He had only to put on shoes and stand as a thorn pierced in the leg - It follows the injection, which saw Dr. Cronin. Of course, Anderson swore, but he thought that the barb accidentally fell into his boots when he was last time in the greenhouse. He pulled a thorn and threw to where I found it. A few minutes later, when he had reached the pond, Anderson paralyzed, and he fell, becoming easy prey for the leeches. Poison can not be detected: the modern medicine does not know the way to identify the strychnine, if the dose is not fatal.

A little thought, I came to the obvious conclusion and asked: - Can I conclude that you suspect of the crime, Mrs. Anderson?

- Definitely. Only she could attend Doggett or conservatory without causing issues, as well as know the habits and Anderson had the opportunity to set a trap. But I'm not sure that it was acting of his own volition. Selecting curare poison as soon refers to a person with Indian roots. I am inclined to think that crime Mrs. Anderson knocked Senor Gomez, who got hold of the poison. My knowledge of anthropology, lead me to believe that Indian blood flowing in his veins.

- But why did she agree to this?

- What is there may be another reason, apart from love? - My friend said with a mocking tone that appeared with him, when he spoke of tender feelings. - What else but love, always driven by women? It is clear that her fondness for Anderson over the years dulled. She admitted to us that our country has remained a stranger to her, that she always longs for the warmth and openness of their homeland. Mrs. Anderson no children, that could tie her to England and could have strengthened the marriage. Passion Anderson absorbs it entirely, he often left his wife for months and also was much older.

And then one day, the young Brazilian pays a visit to this house. He speaks with Mrs. Anderson in her native language of Brazil. And maybe, she soon falls in love with him. They share secrets, as is characteristic of lovers, and it opens Gomes, Anderson - Agent royalists. As an honest diplomat Gomes report the matter to their superiors and receives orders to kill Anderson.

- Wait a minute, Holmes, - I said - it is one thing to run away with her lover, and quite another - to kill on his orders. She ventured to put himself in a very dangerous and difficult situation.

- You are right, Watson, and because I believe that he used a powerful incentive: offered her marriage and a new life in the country she loves.

- Has he gone so far that he was ready to marry for the sake of your career?

Holmes shrugged his shoulders:

- From his point of view, it would be advantageous marriage. In the end, it is the daughter of a senior government official and also inherit all the property of Anderson. It is significant, and by our standards, but in Brazil it is a fortune. What is not a perfect marriage for a man of his origin?

- But the way the murder, Holmes! All curare poisoning horror is that the victim is fully conscious, yet does not die from suffocation due to paralysis of the muscles that control breathing. He felt like leeches suck his blood, but he could neither call for help or to move!

- Really, - agreed Holmes - most unpleasant death. Well, perhaps it's time to talk to Mrs. Anderson.

We returned to the house and asked for permission to speak with the lady alone.

Without any preamble Holmes asked:

- I understand that Mrs Anderson, you promised lord Gomes to marry him?

Woman petrified from the shock of that, of course, and the intent Holmes. He wished that she lost balance and, perhaps said more than I wanted.

- How did you find out? - She murmured. - We did not tell anyone!

Holmes made a laidback gesture.

- The method of deduction, madam. In the same way, he came to the conclusion that you killed her husband with the help of poison curare.

Again she stiffened with fear. For a moment it seemed to me that Mrs. Anderson was going to faint, but she staggered reached the chair and sat down. Her lips moved silently. A few seconds later she woke up a little.

- I hope you did not set out this ridiculous police theory? - She asked haughtily.

Holmes's expression was severe.

- Not yet, madam, but I have gathered evidence that should convince her of your fault. I have no sympathy for you, Mrs. Anderson. In the end, it was cold-blooded murder. Am I right in assuming that you acted on the instigation of the lord Gomes?

She defiantly threw her head back proudly:

- I will not impose on the other guilty of this crime. This is my hand placed the poisoned thorn in his boots. I lost the love of her husband. He betrayed my country. I wanted to be free. Fernando only provided me with the means to kill.

- Well, he has diplomatic immunity. I can not let you hang, and he remained at large. But I insist, madam, that you are both left the country on the next boat, or I'll tell the police everything I know.

She nodded in agreement. We immediately left. Holmes was grim.

- Messy, Watson! - He exclaimed.- One of the most cold-blooded murder, which I have seen, and we can not bring the criminals to justice. Our only consolation is that I do not believe, if such a couple can be happy. I will explain all the facts, Sir Joseph. He must know the truth. I think he would agree that we should not interfere, no matter what conclusions did the coroner. As for the rest, you have to keep quiet.

The Case of the mediums

- I've got an interesting letter, Watson, - said my friend Sherlock Holmes, once in the morning.

Mrs. Hudson has just brought the mail, and Holmes deciphered it, separating the important messages from the accounts and inconsequential correspondence.

- For a business? - I inquired.

- Yes. Maybe I'll take him. The client lives in Birmingham, that violates a smooth course of my life as well as yours, if you want to join me. But, on the other hand, I had stayed in the metropolis, and possibly a change of scenery and stay in a strange city is just what I need.

He gave me a letter, and I read the following:

Sir, although I highly unpleasant devote outsiders into a purely family matters, I believe that your art in exposing frauds and charlatans can render invaluable service to me.

I would ask you to come to my office twenty-first of this month, and then I will explain all the details. You will find a very generous reward.

Yours sincerely James Mërgison

The letter was printed on the form. I learned a printed heading: "Haberdashery Murchison Promontory." According to my information, a large company.

- Tone quite peremptory, - I said.

- Yes, indeed - Holmes agreed, - but I'm inclined to be lenient and to attribute it to trouble for his family. You probably noticed how hard the pen pressed on paper, when he led the word "scam" and "charlatans". In addition, it is a question of my finances, which significantly improve generous reward rich and grateful client. Yes, Watson, on reflection, I decided that necessarily go to Birmingham. I hope you will accompany me.

Until the date set Murchison Promontory, there were only two days. For some time it has taken to send a telegram confirming the agreement to deal with the train schedule and collect things. And here we sit in the first class smoking carriage at the station Euston.

Two hours later, the train arrived in Birmingham. At the station we hired a crew that took us to the "Galanter Murchison Promontory." It was an amazing four-story building: each floor is built in its architectural style. In the corners of the outlandish buildings towering rectangular towers.

We told the porter their names, and the messenger took us to the office Murchison Promontory, located in one of the towers - a spacious, luxuriously furnished room with walls lined with beautiful marble, and marble floors.

Mr. Murchison Promontory rose, greeting us. This tall imposing man is definitely one of those who are "self-made", it was felt the power.

- Ah, Mr. Holmes, I am glad to see you! - he said. - And you too, of course, Mr Watson.

We both bowed.

- If you sit down, I will explain the problem.

Asking twice we did not have to.

Murchison Promontory seemed experienced fluctuations, uncharacteristic for a man of his warehouse. Finally, he decided.

- I wish, Mr. Holmes, that you cheats unmasked. - He hesitated again. - It is very unusual ..

- For us it is not only a duty, but a pleasure, - said Holmes, obviously trying to calm the client. - Please give all the details of the case.

- I must warn you that it is a very sensitive property. It is important that none of what I have said has not become known.

- I assure you of that. We are with Dr. Watson will keep it a secret.

- Of course, - I said.

- So, we are talking about fraud. Flam not me, but my wife. And in the cruelest way. We lost our son, our only child. He died in the Transvaal a few years ago [\[9\]](#) . My wife was devastated - until recently, when it fell under the influence of a woman who pretends to be a psychic. It is a certain Madame Beverly. She argues that established contact with the spirit of our boy, and transmits messages from the afterlife. - He looked at my friend. - I hope, Mr. Holmes, you do not believe in such things?

- No, I assure you, - he said coldly.

- Very good. My wife is under the influence of this woman. She did not mean anything other than the Ouija, who attends, and messages that seem to come from our son.

There is also a question of money. Of course, the medium takes a fee for their services, and has already paid a significant amount. I think the bulk of pocket money every month my wife swims in the pockets of the woman.

Holmes became thoughtful.

- Undoubtedly, there are legal restrictions on the mediums. You will certainly have considered this aspect of the case?

- Yes. I consulted with a lawyer, who has studied the provisions of the law, but nothing I was not comforted. Because this woman has a permanent place of residence, against it can not bring an action under the law of vagrancy, which is often used against gypsies and fortune tellers. Essentially, the law does not prohibit the activities of mediums, if they do not predict misfortune. And this person is very cautious: it generally does not predict anything, but claims that it speaks through our son.

- Clearly, - I mused my friend. - The point, no doubt, extraordinary. Before us is the offender, who is engaged in fraud, but because all his trickery built on a belief in the supernatural, the usual legal procedures of the criminal incrimination are not suitable here. Nor gather evidence and prove nothing. Medium argues that transmits messages that supposedly go with the spirit world, and even the ecclesiastical authorities - the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope - can not deny this.

Murchison Promontory nodded in agreement:

- I know, but I was hoping that with your renowned talents you will find out.

- Well, let's see what I can do. If the medium uses tricks specific to the profession, we will show it to your wife. However, I must say that in such cases, the victim often continues to believe quack simply because he is desperate for comfort, and rejects any idea of fraud.

We sat in silence in a dull, then Holmes began to question Murchison Promontory on the details of the case. He was interested in the frequency of the Ouija, and other sums paid. Finally, half an hour later, he finished his questioning.

- I think that's enough for today, Mr. Murchison Promontory. The next step - talk to your wife. We can come to your home tomorrow morning?

Murchison Promontory tugged at his mustache.

- I understand that it is necessary to investigate, but how do I explain to my wife by your desire to talk to her?

Holmes waved: - It's not a problem. We are with Dr. Watson can, for example, introduced the members of the Company's spiritualistic investigations, allegedly associated with King's College London. In fact, such a society does not exist, but it is unlikely your wife will be checked. We say that they had heard rave reviews about Madame Beverly and we want to talk to someone who knows her. And then we were asked to submit the medium and express the wish to attend the seance.

Murchison Promontory nodded:

- I understood. It would be enough. I can also help you with business cards. We are proud of our Birmingham businesslike, and I know a printer that will make you business cards already this day by day.

Holmes quickly sketched text for business cards, and Mr. Murchison Promontory recommended us a hotel nearby. Whereupon we bowed.

That same evening, after dinner, intending to discuss business, we are sitting comfortably in the hotel room, which, by the way, was quite comfortable. Holmes filled his long pipe, and I lit a cigar.

- Excuse me, Watson, to describe to you some of the tricks used by mediums - my friend said, lighting a cigarette. - We should be alert during the session, so as not to miss them. Firstly, the room lights went out on the pretext that he had allegedly deterred the spirits and in fact, in order to arrange their affairs in the dark. Mediums are almost always at home - it is unlikely you will ever meet wandering medium. The reason is not difficult to find: in your own home is easier to prepare for the session - to hide from prying eyes of various fraudulent devices and equipment, accomplice to hide behind a screen or behind the curtains. During the session, it will emit a different sound, light fires or even designed so that the ceiling starts to drip water.

Sometimes a psychic something hiding in the clothes, for example, hides in the arms of the hooks that you can use to manipulate. Sometimes he ties the feet of sandpaper. When rubbing together pieces of sandpaper publish whimsical sounds. There are thousands of tricks, and I hope to see something new in the course of our investigation.

- But, of course, not every medium - crook - I said. - We have to believe the testimony of a number of experts who observed the session. For example, it says that Helen Berry in America has created a small child of ectoplasm in the presence of witnesses. He made pleading gestures hands and moved his lips, but nothing had been heard. All found it a very moving sight. How is it possible to fake it?

Sherlock Holmes took the pipe from his mouth and waved it in the air.

- I am inclined to assume that the gauze was used here, covered with fluorescent paint. Accomplices could lower it or to swing it, and the audience's imagination completes the rest.

- And yet - I did not give up, - known scientists conducted experiments with the utmost rigor. Mediums disguised themselves under the supervision of, and then injected them into a room designed for a seance, where they fell for the first time. However, despite all this, they have achieved amazing results.

Holmes nodded:

- Yes, I've read about such experiments, but that I have not yet convinced. In the end, if we are baffled by Maskelyne [\[10\]](#) with their demonstrations in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, why not cheat scientists? I am inclined to believe that the most sensible judge seances can not men of science, and magicians.

- So, you're convinced that this Madame Beverly - a fraud?

- Detective consultant would put themselves in a very disadvantageous position, if accepted as true explanations of the supernatural, Watson. Tell me I'm just a client that his diamond necklace stolen by malicious demon, he was afraid, would not wish any longer to use my services and are unlikely to be paid for them. No, I believe in the natural human impulses: the desire to mother, bereaved, find solace - and the desire greedy, vicious person to cash in on the mother's grief.

I shook my head, not agreeing with the unshakeable rationalism of my friend, and soon went to sleep.

We breakfasted at the usual time. fake business cards brought us soon, as promised. At ten o'clock we ordered a cab, which, rattling on the cobbled streets of Birmingham, took us to a house in Edgbaston Murchison Promontory. The carriage stopped in front of a luxury mansion built, probably a few years ago. Presented his business card, we waited for an invitation to the living room, where they saw his client and his wife.

- Mr. Holmes, Dr. Watson, - she said, giving us a hand, - I am very glad to see you. I understand that you brought here to interest Madame Beverly?

- Yes, Mrs. Murchison Promontory, it is, - said Holmes. - Amazing stories about her abilities have reached our society, and we are instructed to gather detailed information about them.

- I'll just be happy to assist you: Madame Beverly gave me a new life, and I owe a lot to her. Please, sit down, and I'm happy to answer your questions.

- Could you tell me to begin with - asked Holmes, taking a notebook - when held your acquaintance with this lady?

- About four months ago.

- And how did it happen that you meet?

- She wrote to me, Mr. Holmes, to this address. I announce that my son Thomas came to her when she fell into a trance at a seance, and asked to contact me. When I read these words, it was at first shocked and felt disgusted. It is well known that we had a son who died during the South African campaign, and I considered it an attempt to lure me vulgar in the seances. But then, in a letter saying that he remembered until the last hour of my favorite saying: "Where there is fear, can not be wisdom."

- «Ubi timor adest, sapientia adesse nequit», - I quoted.

- That's right, Dr. Watson. This statement of Lactantius, one of the early Christians, who lived in Africa [\[11\]](#) . I often quote him, but only in his family circle, and no one, except us, could not have known. I got in touch with this woman the next day and was invited to the session, which took place the next day. - She paused, as it roiled memories. - Do not know if you believe, Mr. Holmes - that my husband does not believe me - but in this session with me said my son!

- So, did you hear his voice?

- Timbre slightly different, Mr. Holmes's voice was more hoarse than Thomas, and said he was a little slurred, but turns his speech. He mentioned the cases of his childhood, which I myself had forgotten and remembered, as he did not mention them. For example, as he was given a toy boat on the tenth birthday and we took him to the river Cole to experience. The current swept steamer, and Tom began to cry. And then Peter, our groom, ran along the shore and into the water to return the toy.

- Of course, it demonstrates the amazing abilities of the medium, - politely acknowledged Holmes. - But back to the question of your son's voice. As I understand it, he did not say a voice Madame Beverly or her own?

- Absolutely. Voice female was much lower, but at the same time different from the voice of Thomas in life. Madam Beverly believes that we are on the ground perceive his voice distorted as a result of the Great Change.

- Clear. Let's talk about your son. What kind of person was he?

Mrs. Murchison Promontory pointed to a standard size photograph, standing on the table. It was a handsome young man depicted in the form of a junior officer.

- This picture was taken on the eve of his departure to the Transvaal. As you can see, he was handsome and well built.

- It form Fifty-eighth Infantry Regiment - said Holmes.

- Yes, ratlendshirtsy. I come from Oukema, our family members serve in the regiment.

- Fifty-eighth regiment was known as one of the most hardy and brave - proudly said Mr. Murchison Promontory. - His soldiers called "iron spin": it was transcend any spanking.

I noticed that Mrs. Murchison Promontory winced slightly at this comment.

- He always was a romantic, Mr. Holmes, - she said. - On it had a strong influence of the glory of the empire, and the poetry of Mrs. Hemans ^[12]. He insisted to join this regiment, and we did not mind.

- Yes, indeed, - said Mr. Murchison Promontory. - We were pleased to see that he is doing his duty to the queen and the homeland. I also believed that it is useful to provide an outlet for youthful energy, to see the world and stay in the role of commander. Of course, I was hoping that in a few years he returned to England and will study our family business, I finally tell him.

- But, alas, it was not to be - continued Mrs. Murchison Promontory. - He was sent together with the regiment to suppress the rebellion in the Transvaal, and he was killed at the Battle of Majuba Hill.

- I think it was three years ago? - Holmes asked.

- Yeah, right.

- Do you have any information about how he died?

- I know something. The enemy was advancing not in close order, but scattered, moving from cover to cover-up, and kept accurate fire. the order to retreat was given, but, as the

Boers had already seized the hilltop retreat turned into a rout. In this confusion, the bullet hit Thomas in the head and he died instantly.

- It Madame Beverly described the battle like this? - Asked my friend.

- Her mouth said Thomas - corrected Mrs. Murchison Promontory with a soft smile.

- Of course, - I have agreed to Holmes. - Very detailed story, which bears the stamp of reliability. - He wrote something down in his notebook, then closed it and said: - I think that thanks to your kind assistance, we have everything we need at the moment. Of course, the next step is a visit to a seance, and then - a conversation with Madame Beverly. Is it permissible for us to hope that you will be so kind as to organize our meeting?

- Tonight it will be convenient?

- Great. But are you sure that it will be free? After all, it was not warned in advance.

- Of course. In the end, I'm her only client.

- Really. This is very unusual. Do you know why she was not satisfied with the sessions for other people bereaved?

- She explained that she takes great effort, but it is not very strong physically to penetrate the underworld. I give her enough money so that she could live on them. In the end, the amount is relatively small, and it suits both of us. Let me write down her address to you. This Hendsuorte, near the city center. Usually Madame Beverly session begins at eight o'clock, so that you could arrive at half past seven.

When we said goodbye to a married couple, and were already on the driveway, Holmes shared with me their thoughts.

- Without a doubt, this involved someone who knew Thomas Murchison Promontory, - he said. - Perhaps it is a servant who has long lived in the house. It is possible that he still serves in this family. This man knows the story of Thomas and familiar with his manner of speaking. Moreover, the conclusion that the person itself consisted in the military: civilian could not be described in this way the tide of battle. This further narrows the range. He found the man, we will solve the riddle. When the source of information is revealed, we will be only to clarify the mechanism of deception resorted to Madame Beverly.

Hendsuort was quite respectable area. When we were paying with kebmenom who brought us here from the hotel, a man insane kind of spoke to us. He was dressed in black, wear clean, though worn. Most of all, struck his eyes, very large and protruding. He stared at us, looking from one to the other.

- You are going to visit a woman who talks to the dead? - He asked quietly, but his voice was heard passion.

He replied Holmes:

- Yes, we are going. And you can do something to tell us about it?

- I can say that your immortal soul in danger! Is it not written in the Book of Leviticus: "Do not turn to the calling of the dead, and wizards do not go, and do not bring yourself to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God " [\[13\]](#) .

- All this is good, and yet, - insisted Sherlock Holmes - what can you tell us about Madame Beverly?

The young man looked at him in disbelief:

- She's a witch! What else you need to know? Not to cross its threshold! Sure, she's beautiful as any succubus or Lamia, who lured men. "Enchantment do not leave alive!" [\[14\]](#)

- Nowadays law does not approve of such actions, - said Holmes.

- To our total destruction! Have we learned nothing from history sorceress of Endor? Did not King Saul sinned by ordering witch cause a ghost of the prophet Samuel, when he was deposed and killed?

Having concluded that we do not hear of this subject is nothing significant, my friend, with a smile, I turned away from him.

We climbed the steps and rang the bell. The door opened a little plump lady in a purple dress, very excited and therefore fussy.

- Good evening, good evening! - she exclaimed. - I think, Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson from the Royal College? Mrs. Murchison Promontory notifying us that you come. Such a sweet lady! I lift up every night prayers of thanksgiving that Madame Beverly was able to give her comfort. Madam Beverly today in great shape - I'm sure we will not be disappointed! I'm

Mrs. Barnard, I live in the neighborhood. I have always been interested in the world of spirits and I am so grateful to Madame Beverly because it allows me to help her during the sessions!

Without ceasing to chatter, she came with us up the stairs to the hall and held a small living room. The main part of the room held a large round table in mahogany. Around it were placed a few chairs, chair stand here as pens and pads for the head. Mrs. Murchison Promontory, which was already there, talking with a pretty fragile young woman. The young lady got up to meet us, and we have again used fake business cards.

- Mr. Holmes, Dr. Watson, - she said frostily, - welcome to my house!

- Thank you, madam, - said Holmes. - We are very grateful for the opportunity to observe the work of the one that is in such close contact with the other world.

She nodded and smiled sweetly:

- You are very kind. Let me inquire whether things are going well in your community?

- Thumbs up - without hesitation said Holmes, - though, sadly, many still refer to the spiritualism with prejudice.

- Thus they demonstrate the narrowness of outlook, - mouthed young woman. - In the words of the Great Bard, "and in the sky, and the earth is hidden more than the dream of your wisdom, Horatio" [\[15\]](#) .

In accordance with its role as secretary, I asked the question:

- Can I clarify, as I write in the report: Miss or Mrs Beverley?

- I prefer the "Madame", - she said with a smile.

- Of course, - I nodded, making a note.

We talked some more, and then began preparations for the seance. Mrs. Barnard fussed, putting out almost all the lights in the room. Holmes asked if I could sit next to a lamp because I have to take notes, and permission was granted. Finally, all took their places around the table. Madam Beverly sat in the big chair with padded, on one side of her fit Holmes on the other - Mrs. Murchison Promontory, we're with Mrs. Barnard sat down next to them.

Sitting down in his place, I dropped a pencil. I had to crawl under the table for them, and I showed up after a few seconds, muttering apologies.

Mediatix between this world and the leaned back in his chair, his eyes closed. Her head moved on the pads.

- Thomas! - She called authoritative voice. - Thomas! Your mother is here!

Nothing happened. Madam Beverly began to rock in his chair, crying for the dead, and so - several times. And suddenly her tense face relaxed. His head leaned back in the chair cushion, breathing became labored.

His mouth fell open, and she said - but not his voice. This voice was much lower, and sounded like a muffled.

- Mama! - He said.

- Tom! - Cried Mrs. Murchison Promontory. - I'm here!

- Mom, you should not grieve, - said the voice. - I went to where we need to go, only a few years earlier. Not so far from the time when we will be together.

- Oh, Tom, I miss you so! - Lamented the unhappy mother.

- I can not stay here any longer. I call. Be happy, Mom.

- Oh, Tom, not so soon! Please stay.

- At this time I can not. Maybe next time. Please, come talk to me again.

- I will come! I'll definitely come! - Sobbed Mrs. Murchison Promontory.

For a while there was silence, then Madame Beverly stirred. She abruptly woke up and looked around in obvious confusion. - Happened? - She asked. - Thomas was here?

- Yes, there was, Madame Beverly - calmed her Mrs. Murchison Promontory. - On you can always rely on. You are such a reliable guide. He was able to stay very long, but, as always, gave me words of comfort.

- I'm so glad - Madam Beverly whispered. - But now, dear Mrs. Murchison Promontory and you, gentlemen, may I ask you to leave me? Sorry for being rude, but I'm so tired during the sessions. I offer you my apologies, but I can not get up to take you.

We immediately got to their feet.

- No need to apologize after the effort that you had to make, Madam, - politely said Holmes. - I think we have enough material for a report, and we are very grateful. Upon returning, I will talk with our secretary, and hopefully he will be able to send you the proper amount of gratitude for your kindness.

- As you wish, Mr. Holmes. My needs are modest. As the poet said, "there is no better board than a great joy" [\[16\]](#).

- Let me see your guests, and then I'll make you a cup of tea! - Clucked Mrs. Barnard.

Madam Beverly smiled at her gratefully.

Holmes and I departed. Mrs. Murchison Promontory offered us a ride in his coupe, but Holmes refused, and we said goodbye.

- I have to admit, Holmes, - I said, - Madame Beverly, in my opinion, extremely sincere and outspoken young woman.

Sherlock Holmes smiled ironically:

- The highest praise an actor, Watson said that he convincingly portrayed sincerity.

- We have no proof that she is an actress!

- On the contrary, it's obvious. You have certainly noticed that she quoted "Hamlet" and "The Merchant of Venice." The first quote is often distorted, and she said the exact text. In addition, she enjoys the make-up, and puts it neatly as a professional Actors: broad strokes and bright, it is good to be seen from the stage. And one more thing - though, perhaps, it is far-fetched - the name of Beverly, perhaps taken from the "Rivals" Sheridan [\[17\]](#). There's that name is called Jack Absolute, when he wants to hide who he is.

- Here's how ... - I muttered in confusion.

- I wonder whether the man behind all this? I did not see signs of the presence of the male, and she put things in the fog, speaking of his family situation. In English society the polite form of address "Madame" for both married and unmarried women.

I coughed:

- In fact, Holmes, I noticed one thing: the lady in an interesting position.

Holmes raised his eyebrows:

- Indeed?

- Yes, I am quite sure. I noticed a slightly rounded waist as we were. And purposely dropped a pencil to look at her ankles. They are slightly swollen - this is a typical swelling during pregnancy. I would say that it is the fourth or fifth month.

- Well, well, Watson! - Laughed my friend. - Then you will definitely beat me. Of course, I noticed that her dress a bit crowded in the chest and waist, but carried it due to the fact that it is due to the stout will improve prosperity.

I felt ridiculously happy because of the praise virtuoso deduction.

- So, thanks to your powers of observation, - he continued - we now know that there is involved a man, but she does not want it known. Of course, immediately raises the question: "Why?". There are no reasons why the lady, entering into communion with the spirits of the dead should not be her husband, and many of them are married.

I noticed that we were going not in the direction of the hotel, and asked where we were going.

- I do not idle today, Watson, and visited a local craftsman and gave him a job. Come with me and see if he had fulfilled my order.

- Is not it too late for that?

- Not at all. As already asked us to Mr. Murchison Promontory, is highly regarded in Birmingham quickness, and then ready to work long hours in order to please the customer.

Holmes took me long, dirty streets, and finally we came into the yard, over which hung a sign "Jas. Ellis - production of files and rasps. " Going to old peeling door, Holmes knocked. We opened unshaven subject unpresentable species - apparently, it was Ellis himself. At the sight of Holmes, he grinned very disrespectful.

- Hey, boss - familiarly he said to my friend. - I have fulfilled your job for. Since you have two sovereigns, as agreed. - With these words he gave Holmes mi small package in brown paper.

The amount seemed incongruously large, because work, probably took no more than a few hours, but Holmes paid without objection. When we left, Ellis stood, leaning on his door, and looked after us with a knowing smirk, the meaning of which I could not comprehend.

We stopped a cab and went back to the hotel.

- Rest for a few hours, Watson, and then to accept the visit of Madam Beverly! - He said cheerfully.

I raised my eyebrows. This could only mean one thing: we have to break into her house. However, I did not protest.

At dawn Holmes knocked on my door. I immediately woke up, seized the hunting passion. Since I slept dressed, then it is going quickly. We left the hotel through the back door. In the hands of Holmes was his leather bag.

At this hour there could be no question of a cab, so we had more than a mile before striding Hendsuorta. Turning to the street where she lived Madame Beverly, we have to move very carefully, so as not to wake those who have light sleep.

Near Holmes looked around the house, wanting to make sure that we have not noticed, then first descended into the courtyard below street level. There he opened his bag and took out a package that he gave Ellis. Unfolding it, my friend took a curious form of adaptation. It was a thin steel rod attached to it sturdy wooden handle. The end of the rod was flattened and bent into a hook. Holmes put the stem between the leaves of the window and gently wiggled them. Then he turned the handle strongly and opened the hook latch. Slowly raising the window frame, we got into the basement. Holmes quietly dropped frame and locked the box again.

Now he took out of his bag and flashlight, turning it on, looked around the room. Apparently, there were engaged in crafts and something master. I saw a different sewing

and home accessories. Holmes shone his torch up, and we saw a rubber tube several feet long and about two inches in diameter, which protruded from the circular opening in the ceiling. I recognized her as a device for the negotiations, which are often used owners of apartments, to mingle with visitors without opening the door.

- That's right, Watson, - whispered my friend. - Accomplices placed near the tube. It runs inside the medium seat and ends in one of the pads. With a phone to his ear, her clearly hear what is happening during the session and at the right time can speak into the phone. This creates the effect that the voice comes from the mouth of the medium. Simple, but effective trick.

We searched the room for what some papers or things that could tell what kind of person spoke into the phone, but found nothing. True, there were found unmistakable signs of man's presence. We could not climb to the upper floors: the risk was too great, that we find. In the end, we have brought all the original look and left the house through a basement door. Holmes used cardboard card with a spring to lock is not clicked.

- Well, at least now we have the proof that it is a fraud - I said hopefully when we come back through the deserted streets. - We can easily insist that this device has been shown to Mrs. Murchison Promontory.

- I am not yet satisfied, Watson. Of course, we can show up, and very likely - though not inevitable, as I have already said - that would be enough to destroy Mrs. Murchison Promontory faith in the medium. However, we do not get to the bottom. Somewhere there is a man who knew the life of Tom and ready to betray his memory for the money. I have a duty to my client, so I have to find that person and to expose it.

Sherlock Holmes usually get up early, but he slept little that night, that at nine o'clock in the morning was still in bed. As for me, I will never adhere to certain regulations, and has awakened at this hour. After breakfast, I decided to do a little investigation on their own.

I knew that the old soldiers, as well as all who are connected by common interests or shared experiences, are commonly found in pubs to chat with fellow-in-arms and share memories. Since, according to Holmes, details the medium supplying the former military, is to look for it, it occurred to me, in a tavern, where collected old hendsuortskie warriors.

I set about trying to find a pub and ask a few questions to the owner and visitors. At the same time, I flattered myself hope to unleash their tongues, mentioning that he once was in the Fifth Northumberland Rifle Regiment. Perhaps so I can bring the conversation to a South African campaign?

Holmes Leaving a note, I went to carry out his plan.

A few hours later, I burst into the room of my friend, whom he found reading the "Daily Telegraph".

- Holmes, the case is solved! - I said happily. Sherlock Holmes smiled, leaning back in his chair.

- Well done, Watson! Finally, the student has surpassed the teacher! Can I now, when the tables are turned, to ask you to express its views?

I caught him in ridicule tone, but he was sure that I can convince him to their cause.

- I found a beer in Hendsuorte where old soldiers gather - I explained. - It's called "Black Eagle". I went there this morning and had a talk with the owner. He said that one of his regular customers was wounded at the Battle of Majuba Hill! Your theory is that there is involved servant Murchison Promontory, is wrong. It is clear that this man was a friend of the young Tom Murchison Promontory. During the long breaks between marches are bored exchanged personal memories. He learned all the little details of life Tom: episodes from his childhood, which he remembered with love, the names of his uncles and aunts, and the like. And, of course, the man had studied his way of speaking and of speech.

Freed from military service after being wounded, he returned to his hometown. There he meets a woman whom we know as Madame Beverly, and they come up with the perfect way to make money. His accomplice - or mistress - says that it is able to make contact with the spirit of the deceased. This person can not mimic the voice of Tom, and therefore simply says hoarsely. The latter also explains - I continued, trying to keep all the ends converge - why it hides the existence of this man. If we were to talk to him, he would have recognized the voice, and the wound would give his military background. Let's give a police matter, and let this couple be arrested.

Holmes thought.

- And the young man, the crook - he finally said - you know the nature of his injury?

I was puzzled by this question.

- He was shot in the jaw by a bullet from a rifle, as I understand it. But how does this relate to business?

- It can make a big difference - do not you understand? - Sherlock Holmes sprang to his feet. - You got hold of the missing piece of the puzzle, Watson. We immediately pay a visit to Madame Beverly and her accomplice. I think we do not need the police.

Soon we were knocking on the door of the medium. Madam Beverly opened itself. When they saw us Holmes and her expression was surprised and wary.

- Good afternoon, madam, - Holmes greeted with a bow. - Are you comfortable now will speak with me and Dr. Watson?

- As you wish, - she said.

Madam Beverly obviously not pleased our visit, however, it has allowed us to enter and invited into the living room, where we had previously attended a seance. In daylight the room looked poorer than the drawn drapes and low lighting. Carpets worn, shabby furniture, and both initially was not particularly good quality.

Madam Beverly closed the door and joined us. She suggested that we sit down and remained standing herself. - So what can I do for you, Mr. Holmes? - She asked.

- Before I start, may I ask your partner to join us? What I have to say concerns him as much as you.

She kept her eyes on him, wondering what to say.

- I'm all business in this house, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, - finally she said icily. - Deign to explain what you need.

- Very good. I want to appeal to you as a woman who soon she would be the mother you to think about the feelings of another mother who lost her child.

- I do not understand.

- Mrs. Murchison Promontory is mourning the loss of her son. Her life is bleak, and not a day goes by that she did not feel pain at the thought of it. Meanwhile, as you well know, Thomas Murchison Promontory alive. I am here to ask you both to reveal the truth to his parents. I declare to you plainly that if you do not do this, then I will.

Madam Beverly did not answer. She stood silently, feeling overwhelmed, which I could only guess. At that moment we heard footsteps: someone coming up the stairs from the

basement. The door opened and a young man entered. The lower part of his face was closed scarf.

- I have listened to the speaking tube, - he explained. The young man took Madame Beverly's hand and, having brought to the couch, sat.

- Please, have a seat, gentlemen, - he offered us.

We sat down, and after a pause, during which the young man collected his thoughts, he told us his story. I had to strain to hear something as he spoke very vaguely, and a scarf muffled sound.

- You're right, gentlemen, I really Thomas Murchison Promontory, - he said. - From the moment we landed in Africa, we had to fight with the enemy, to fight with who we did not know how. Drills elected unusual tactic for us: excellent hands, they led us on fire with rifles, skillfully using natural cover. We are constantly carried if great losses. In addition, they fought in his usual attire of farmers, often painted in brown tones, similar to the color of the earth, and easily merge with the landscape. And we were in the form of formation of the regiment: red uniforms, blue pants and white helmets.

We came to march into the mountains of the Drakensberg, and we were ordered to break camp at Majuba Hill. There were about six hundred - several regiments, including Ratlendshirsky. We camped in a large shallow depression on the top of the hill. The Boers attacked us on the same day. They are very accurately fired from rifles, hiding behind the boulders. To return fire, our people had to take a position on the outer edge of the camp, on the edge of the basin. They were an easy target, and kill them one by one. Eventually the Boers pushed our soldiers from the edges of the trough and is now shooting at us, Skopje valley. We hardly saw the enemy, gentlemen - a thick smoke was continuously palivshih of their rifles.

We have tried to escape from depression and go down the hill, but it was not a retreat and escape - we are running away at breakneck speed. In this dump, I was wounded in the face - the bullet entered behind the left ear, and the output shattered my jaw. I rolled down the hill and for a while was unconscious.

When I came to, it was getting dark already. I crawled away: my only goal was to get out of there as far as possible. When I drank from the creek, my happiness, I accidentally met the old hunter, in whose veins flowed the English, not Dutch blood. He was silent. This man bandaged my wounds and stayed with me until then, until I got stronger so that he could go.

I had no desire to go back to the regiment. I just wanted to end the war and not fight anymore. Day after day, I made my way to Durban, located on the coast. This journey took more than a year, and I had to beg for alms. But, I must say, I'm not hungry, when people saw my terrible wounds covered their disgust and pity, and they were given what I needed. In the first week of my travels farmer's wife I donated my old clothes, so that I could throw the rags in which turned my form.

I worked for a train to Liverpool and returned to his hometown. However, I could not seem to the eyes of parents: my mother has always been so proud of my good looks, and his father, endowed with a sense of duty, to despise the man who escaped from the enemy, and deserted from his regiment. I prefer that they believed that I died fighting for their country.

But I have found again my dear Jenny. I met her after the performance in the Prince of Wales Theatre: Let 'Midsummer Night's Dream, "and she played Helen. We loved each other, but I could not tell my parents, because they would find an actress unsuitable match for her only son. We decided to wait until I served in the army: then my position will be strengthened, and we will announce our love.

When I got to her door, she let me in, not paying attention to my injury, and soon we were married. I can not find a job, people shy away when he saw my face, and want to quickly get rid of me. They do not care that I received their wounds in the service of the queen. And I can not even claim to be a soldier's pension, as deserted. We lived on the earnings of Jenny in a theater, but when she realized that she would be the mother, the threat of starvation faced us, and would starve, not only we, but also our child.

It was then that we came up with the idea of contact with my mother, telling about communicating with my spirit. We are aware that this is not good, but because, in the end, I took the money from his own family. This idea has worked well, and we were able to put aside some money. We intended to eventually save enough to emigrate to one of the colonies in Africa or in Australia. There I would be a farmer. I'm still strong, despite the injury, and my appearance did not matter in a country where a man is judged not by his appearance.

Thomas finished his story. Holmes looked at him with compassion, and who would not be filled with self-pity, he heard such a story?

- There is no need to continue the deception, which is painful for all of you - my friend said firmly. - Getting to know your parents, and especially his father, he convinces me that they

have a simple and friendly meet your wife. Father loves you more than you think, Tom. Allow us to Watson go along with you and tell the news as gently as possible.

The young couple exchanged a glance and gesture expressed their consent. We left the house and hired a hired carriage, which dovezla us to Murchison Promontory home. We said to the officer, we want to see Mr. and Mrs. Murchison Promontory on urgent business. When we appeared before them, they froze in shock and disbelief, looked at the mutilated face of his son. Then Mrs. Murchison Promontory, staggering, went up to him.

- Tom! - She cried heartbreaking voice. - Tom! - And she struggled clutched it to his chest.

Mr. Murchison Promontory took a few steps and grabbed Thomas by the hand.

- Tom, my boy! - He said curtly. - How is this possible?

- Mother, father, - said Thomas, subsided when the first gusts of joy - you can ever forgive me? I let you think that I was dead. I deserted from the army and lured you money with shameful trick.

- Well, of course we forgive you! - Said Mrs. Murchison Promontory. - Are you with us again. And it is not worth all that we have?

Mr. Murchison Promontory grunted in assent.

- Now, - continued Thomas, - let me ask you one more thing. Take our family Jenny, who became my wife and is under the heart of my child.

The elder Mrs. Murchison Promontory smiled through her tears.

- Grandson - this is the only thing we are missing to be completely happy - she said.

- Mr. Murchison Promontory, - said Holmes - Watson, we want no more bother you with their presence. If you are satisfied with the outcome of the case, we ask for permission to leave.

Mr. Murchison Promontory instantly again become a business man.

- I'm not just satisfied, but I must confess that this outcome has surpassed my wildest sword you, - he said. - Can I invite you to my office?

We followed him, and he took out his checkbook and began to write quickly.

- Well, Mr. Holmes, I hope you find this amount of adequate compensation for your work.

Holmes glanced at the check and bowed.

- You are very generous, sir, - he said, putting the check into his breast pocket.

- Not at all! That I rewarded, - said Mr. Murchison Promontory.

He personally escorted us to the door and said goodbye, shook hands.

- But tell me, Holmes - I asked, as we walked away from the house - why you were so sure of this fraud is Murchison Promontory Thomas himself? After all, we had no reason to suspect that he was alive.

- Although it was highly unlikely that Thomas had deserted from his regiment, say, or was captured, the opportunity is still there. I did not realize it, because at seances sounded authentic voice of Thomas - and for no apparent reason.

But then you have done your precious discovery, learning about the local residents who fought at Majuba Hill. In itself, it was very surprising - in fact in the battle, few survived. But that he also turned out to be a close friend of Thomas but everything else was living now Birgingeme - this is too much! There are no coincidences. An important key was the mention of your injury to the jaw: it explains the change vote. Coupled with the fact that Madame Beverly found out about her pregnancy at the same time, when contacted with an older Mrs. Murchison Promontory, and did not take money from other sources, it is finally clarified the matter.

All the laurels belong to you, Watson, and therefore I am particularly sad that you can not add this story to your collection of short stories. Although officials of the War Ministry itself did not fight, they do not favor those who fled from the shelling.

Case of the Russian anarchist

One day I was standing at the window of our apartment, idly watching the bustle of Baker Street, when he noticed a light convertible that was approaching at high speed from the south side. He crossed the street and stopped at our door.

- Holmes! - I excitedly called his friend. - Now you'll hear from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Holmes, sitting comfortably with the newspaper in his chair, looked at me and laughed.

- If a man in a blue double-breasted coat, gray trousers with red stripes and a cap with the royal monogram you announce the arrival of ministerial messenger, do not expect praise for the ability to deduction. However, let's see what he brought - no doubt something interesting!

We were looking forward to, until Mrs. Hudson has announced the visitor. Appearing, he stretched out on the "attention" rack and saluted us.

- I have a telegram for Mr. Sherlock Holmes, - a messenger reported.

- This is me - my friend said, taking the letter, opened it and read. - Hmm! - He said. - Lord Hawkesbury asks me to visit his "urgent at a convenient time for me." I think it means that we have to rush headlong. I hope you can accompany me, Doctor?

- With the greatest pleasure!

We released a messenger and drove in a cab to Whitehall. Once we announce their names as we immediately carried out in the Cabinet of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

- Good afternoon, gentlemen, - he welcomed us. - Very kind of you to come so soon. Please sit down.

Holmes and I sat, but Lord Hawkesbury remained standing. It seemed that something does not give him no rest.

- I invited you here, Mr. Holmes, for a very delicate matter, - he said. - Of course, I know about your outstanding abilities and the ability to keep secrets. Lord Holdherst informed me about the service you rendered to our country in a case concerning the naval agreement, and I am absolutely sure that delicate situation, I'm going to discuss will remain between us.

My friend nodded, confirming these words. The Minister continued:

- The case concerns the safety representative of the major European powers. Relations between our countries are very fragile. There is an ongoing armed clashes between the

two bordering each other African colonies, which belong to our two empires. In these collisions involved military units stationed there in our countries. If only for a short time is not reached some agreement, we may well be in a state of war. The government Powers in question, has sent here a representative to resolve our differences. I, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, mandated to reach satisfactory to both parties resolve the issue. Therefore, as you can imagine, it is extremely important that the envoy had no reason to complain about the reception accorded to him or any threat.

- Of course. And why should he complain about it?

At Lord Hawkesbury had become a grim look.

- There are political forces, gentlemen, for which any government is unacceptable. They say they are fighting for the liberation of people from any authority, but if their efforts have been successful, we would have no freedom, and complete arbitrariness of villains, which would not have held back. These people will seize any opportunity to make a split in society and undermine confidence in the existing row on. In this case, they are given a unique opportunity, when only one murder method but cause a major war.

Scotland Yard is completely dedicated to all the circumstances. Create a group to investigate security threats of this diplomat. It is headed by Inspector Lestrade, whom you probably know. Needless to say, I am confident in the competence of our police, but in the current special circumstances ... - Here he paused, obviously not knowing how to proceed.

Holmes casually waved his hand:

- Maybe they could use support in the investigation related to a foreign diplomat, holding such a high position?

Lord Hawkesbury immediately seized on this hint:

- Of course of course! Are you sure all outlined. Such a person as you are well familiar with the situation on the continent, it may appear valuable ideas.

- You do me the honor, sir, your faith in my abilities, but I can not vouch for success in such circumstances, when motive and means to carry out a political assassination have a lot of people. In such cases, the police, which everywhere has its eyes and ears - the best weapon which you have.

- In general, I agree with you completely, but present-day adversaries probably decided to resort to the aid of foreign anarchist having a great experience "propaganda of the deed", as they call it on its repulsive jargon. In other words, propaganda by killing innocent people by a bomb or a revolver. This foreign agent - Prince Peter Kropotkin. He is Russian, until recently, lived in Paris. Kropotkin has been well known in anarchist circles. Although it is impossible to present convincing evidence required by the court, it is believed that he is behind the recent violent demonstrations in Reims, the explosion of bombs in Lyon and other illegalities. Six days ago, this man suddenly left Paris, and now in London.

- And you are quite sure that his visit is connected with the visit of your messenger?

- Let's just say we have a very strong suspicion. As you know, the Paris police has at its disposal a huge number of spies and informants who provide her details. So, we received reliable information that the departure of Prince Peter followed the visit of the mysterious Russian. Last little known French and spoke to the guest house hostess good english. This person came immediately after the visit of the diplomat was arranged, and soon Prince Peter left for England. Dates coincide so that this can not be ignored.

- Can I inquire whether it was widely known about the diplomatic visit?

Lord Hawkesbury's lips tightened.

- I understand what you are driving, Mr. Holmes. No, this visit was not widely known, and from here we can conclude that someone in my ministry informs anarchists. I put in front of you, Mr. Holmes, just two vital to our country's problems: to prevent action against our guest of honor, and to find an informant in my ministry.

- Do you know the current whereabouts of Prince Pyotr?

- Yes. He did not conceal his movements. However, it would be useless, because keeping a close eye on him. He takes a hotel room "Savoy". People Inspector Lestrade are vigilant observation of him, and he is with someone to meet, as it becomes known. His room was searched and luggage; his letters opened and read through the post office, followed by walking around its tail. It does nothing to prevent surveillance - apparently she had even amused.

- He has come in visitors?

- Big number. And it almost every evening dinner in the light. Sadly, its activities are consonant with, although only partially, fashionable now decadent nihilism.

- Why do not you just arrest him under the pretext or another? If you had kept him in a cell for several weeks, and then released, explaining what happened regrettable misunderstanding, the problem would be solved.

Lord Hawkesbury pursed his lips:

- As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have little authority within the borders of our country. Instructions of this kind should come from the Minister of Internal Affairs. Unfortunately, he did not agree with my assessment of the situation. He rightly points out that the Russian nobility is closely related to English - because the Queen is rumored to be nourished affection for the late king, when he was crown prince - and we have seriously insulted them by arresting Russian aristocrat. The Minister said that my fears - a chimera generated by the French, who are known to be overly impulsive. He believes that rash actions could jeopardize our expanding trade with Russia. And, frankly, I can not deny it. Our trade relations really have increased so much that my ministry had to hire three more translators.

Here I involuntarily remembered the talk about the fact that the weak health of Prime Minister will resign the next elections. Lord Hawkesbury and the Minister of Internal Affairs considered the most likely candidates for his post. I did not say anything, but I was hurt to realize that the security of the country is put on a par with the fight for the seat.

- It is clear that Peter was not the Prince throws a bomb - yet said my friend - otherwise it would have been put on trial. He - the brain, which gives rise to crime plan and directs the actions of the Executive fanatic. So, you mean that I have to find the people he chooses his weapons, organizes, instructs and inspires. - Holmes leaned back in his chair and joined his finger tips his characteristic gesture. - I will not hide from you, sir, that it is extremely difficult. All the advantages on the side of an anarchist. You can not ask for a foreign diplomat that he was hiding? It would be incompatible with his dignity. He is forced to follow fixed routes and to meet with the same people. Criminals have all the possibility to explore the nature of the terrain, look for a shelter, leisurely choose the weapons and prepare the way to escape.

Lord Hawkesbury forgotten so much that I almost began to wring their hands, but then he turned to the window and began to look at St. James Park. Undoubtedly, at the same time he was thinking about the collapse of his career and reputation when Prince Peter and his minions succeed. He will be cursed as a man who has not fulfilled his duty and did not prevent the war.

- Of course, you are right, Mr. Holmes, and I can only ask you to do everything in your power. You only need to say, and you will have everything you need. In addition, the Inspector Lestrade will receive instructions to provide you with any assistance.

- Naturally, I will make every effort. Your diplomat currently in London?

- No. Fortunately, he, like many of his countrymen, loves to hunt, so we took him for a week in Inverness shoot grouse. We have referred to the fact that our differences are better discussed in a relaxed atmosphere. In this remote area of each new person in sight, so we believe that as long as a diplomat in security. My deputy, along with assistant clarifies details and inform me via telegraph. The problem is complicated, and therefore the discussion is slow, so it is hoped hold a diplomat in Northern Scotland for ten days. After that he must return to London, and then begin active patrols between my Ministry and its embassy, and so a few days - until finally the issue will be resolved. If at that time you can not find the killers, this will be the most dangerous period.

- Well, we still have a little time - Sherlock Holmes said. - Watson We will investigate the matter and report to you as soon as we can.

Goodbye to the minister, we went back to Baker Street.

- Data! - Exclaimed my friend. - To go into action, we need facts. Let's first look for our hero in my index. - He was referring to a voluminous set of different shaped biographical data, incident records, experiments and other various information, which it supplemented, when something attracted his attention.

A little digging among folders drawn up on the sideboard, Holmes drew a fat envelope, shook out its contents on the table and began to sort through.

- Prince Peter Kropotkin, more precisely, Peter Kropotkin. Entered the Corps of Pages at the age of fifteen years, made an officer. The young man was in the army, volunteered to serve in the Amur Cossack army. He participated in expeditions to Eastern Siberia, and the matter was to his liking.

Upon his retirement, he went to Switzerland, where he met with the so-called thinkers of the Jura Federation, rejects any political power, and they attach it to anarchism.

Soon he began to publish the magazine "Avant-garde", called for "propaganda of the deed." Here a clipping from this periodical, Watson, that I could translate as follows: "We - for a violent way. Let's take up the gun hanging on the walls of our attics. "

As already informed our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kropotkin considered a leading force behind a number of murders and violent demonstrations. Through military training he remains extremely cool in critical situations - some might even call it heartless. It is said that one day he was sitting in a Paris cafe, and in the meantime it exploded a bomb in a nearby street. "It's in the Luxembourg Palace!" - The waiter said. Kropotkin took a sip of absinthe and corrected him: "I think, in the cafe" Odeon ". "

- This man is a monster! - I cried.

- Totally agree with you - calmly replied Holmes. - But he will not give up in the mind and courage. If we add to this its many years of experience, we can conclude that he is a dangerous opponent. I'm afraid it is too tough to Lestrade. Nevertheless, let's plot the inspector's visit and see how his success.

We found Lestrade in his office, where all the evidence of intense activity. The constables in uniform and plain clothes detectives constantly coming and going. Lestrade himself was elated.

- It is quite another thing when given all of what you ask, and even more - he was frank. - It's so nice! We were able to follow his excellency day and night. I have no doubt that if he scratched his nose as someone of my people at once will inform about this.

- And if they noticed something more substantial? - Asked my friend.

- Nothing at all! - Said Lestrade. - Between you and me, gentlemen, I think that Lord Hawkesbury simply obsessed with Prince. We're now watching the Russian around the clock, but he leads a life normal for a person of his Circle. He found only respectable people - not, perhaps, the word is not suitable because it is seen by many modern writers, the moral of which, in my opinion, leaves much to be desired. Anyway, he does not enter into relations with any of those whom you would call dangerous, say with the anarchists. It is unlikely that a person occupying a high position, wants to change the established order. Yes, he sometimes rub shoulders with unsuitable now, but what's wrong in the end?

On the other hand, - he continued the inspector, - raised a warning finger - we should not be complacent. We here have directed all their attention to the foreigners, and yet we have plenty of local troublemakers. And now, when my order arrived constables, we can

take care of this and the public. Not everyone knows this, but there are individuals who submitted an ardent patriot, but do want to overthrow the government. They call themselves the Jacobites and believe that the royal family has usurped the throne is rightfully owned by the Stuarts, interpret something about the fact that William of Orange was a foreigner ^[18]. As I found out, they're everywhere, and well organized.

He took out his notebook and began to flip through it.

- So far I have been able to introduce their people in the Order of the White Rose, Legitimists Club, the Society of King Charles the Martyr, Club Badges white, red carnations Society and the Order of Saint-Germain. All of them wish to do away with the constitution. This is where lies the real danger, Mr. Holmes! This basically gentlemen, so that they have the money and brains. If they have started to use the dynamite, it would have been a hundred times worse than any anarchist. But now, when my people are present at all their meetings, I can guarantee that this will not happen.

- I must admit, I have always believed that the Jacobites just eccentric romance, - said my friend.

Lestrade laughed happily.

- Well, you can not just provide E Holmes erased. But I believe that in this case the police keeps everything under control.

Ignoring this obvious taunts Holmes agreed with the inspector that if necessary we can immediately contact the police. Lestrade promised to inform employees about their place of residence, if he suddenly needed to leave his office.

Back at Baker Street, we discussed what steps we should take.

- The murder of a famous person who is well guarded, requires complex planning, - explained to me Sherlock Holmes. - Experienced killer will take care of that in his possession were a lot more people than, according to police, he would need. Recall that in the murder of the late king was attended by three militants, operating separately. They waited in the place where the royal carriage to slow down before the bridge. The first bomb killed the king and seized the bomber. But then the second bomb dropped, and his Majesty was killed. Later it was found that the third killer waiting to get on the case, if the first two fail ^[19].

Today's enterprise, which involved many people from three different countries can not be organized in a minute. Instructions not probormochesh casually as theatrical replica of the way. Now, when the anarchists called to the agent's England, who assumed leadership of the assassination attempt, they will need to meet, and more than once, because they will inevitably begin to debate. The conflict is inherent in the nature of an anarchist. Any anarchist state in the long run will consist of one person. A tireless Lestrade immediately inform us about these meetings. So, where can they be found? How is the transmission and update instructions?

- Maybe in a waiter? - I suggested.

- Maybe. Many waiters - foreigners and "Savoy" - a very modern hotel. None of the staff can not be excluded from the list of suspects. Such a thing as killing a major political figure, should be well organized, and our task - to find out exactly how. We leave it to Lestrade conduct surveillance, while they themselves try to break a vicious circle.

- It will not be easy.

- Yes indeed. But we will move to this step by step, the doctor. First you need to arrange a meeting with his Excellency. I think it is important to look at this man. We have to gain his trust, to converge closer to his friends, and then we will have a chance to calculate the conspirators.

The next day, Holmes had disappeared, but the next morning inquired, holding my button:

- How would you like to become an anarchist, Watson? One of those who want to risk their lives for freedom?

- I have to be masked? - I asked doubtfully.

- Not at all! You will be in who you are - a doctor, but the doctor, who care about the plight of the oppressed. There is no sense approach to our hero, not being represented: he immediately suspected something was wrong, whatever the circumstances. But if we can create a legend, a different matter. I made some inquiries, and I think that will help us. You will not work with me to Paddington?

- Of course! - I said eagerly.

We were twenty minutes on Marylebone Road, then Holmes plunged into the maze of narrow streets, which took place near the railway line. At the end of this walk we turned

into a dirty little courtyard. In one corner was a saddler workshop, which apparently was not swamped with work. Holmes pointed to a number of steps on the side of the building, leading to the top.

- As I understand it, we go there, - he said.

He climbed the steps and knocked on the door. To my surprise, we discovered a young lady in a decent dress and also with decent manners. Features She had a pretty sharp on the nose glasses sat.

- How can I help you, gentlemen? - She asked formally.

Holmes bowed: - My name is - Sherlock Holmes, and this is my good friend, Dr. John Watson. We've been sympathize with your cause. Only recently, however, it became clear that nothing can be achieved, if not to move from words to deeds. Therefore, we have come to you to find out whether you can be of any help in your endeavors.

- Please, come in.

We were in the room was a small printing press. The room was littered with piles of newspapers, boxes of typographic fonts and various details of the mechanism. In the center stood a hand-printing machine, ink-spattered. Behind the desk, where towering mountains of paper, sat a very pretty lady. When we entered she raised questioning eyes.

- I'm Cassandra Stevens - had the girl, let us - and this is my sister, Jane. Jane, these gentlemen have offered to help in our work.

Jane's face lit up with a charming smile.

- We always come in handy extra pair of hands, - she said.

Holmes bowed to Jane.

- We both are not alien to literary pursuits and it could, for example, to edit the article and read the proofs. In addition, we have enough forces, and we would be happy to help that requires the application of physical force.

At these words, Cassandra eased somewhat.

- Yes, the physical effort are not easy for us, - she said. - You do not drink tea with us? Over tea, we could discuss what help we can get from you.

So we got to the edition of "Torch", a small anarchist-leaning newspapers, which then divorced a great many. The main part of this movement were young idealists like Cassandra and Jane, who grew up in the family of the writer and received a liberal education. Deeply concerned about the suffering of the poor in countries such as Cuba and Russia, they have decided to draw attention to the disaster through their "propaganda of the word." Later I found that, in comparison with many radical newspapers and magazines "Torch" was rather moderate.

Almost all of the following days we spent in the "Torch". Helped they could. I sorted poured after dialing font, engaged delivery articles of the rules was to run errands and perform various errands.

Gradually, we became acquainted with those who often frequented the office. There've been a Polish count in a worn velvet, constantly talk about their estates near Krakow, which robbed him of power. To look more "proletarians", the only occupation which were apparently loud denunciation of the capitalist system that prevented us from working. Especially a lot of noise produced one, drunkard. Fortunately, getting a small amount, it is usually returned to the local pub. Visited by fans and Jane, scrawny young people, representing writers.

In addition to the girls themselves constantly worked in the editorial, we only Holmes, than quickly gained their trust.

When Holmes decided that the fruit is ripe, he casually touched upon, for which everything was started.

- Lady, you know, that is currently in London is the famous revolutionary, Prince Pyotr Kropotkin? - He asked.

- Oh, really ?! - Cassandra cried. - I've heard a lot about him. How wonderful it would be to meet and discuss our progress with someone who has such a great experience!

On Holmes' face took on a thoughtful expression.

- Perhaps it could be organized. My friend told me that the Prince regularly drink tea in the "Cafe Royal". Why do not go there too and did not submit to it?

The girls did not have to persuade. I think because of the dedication to their work, they rarely go out, and then found an excellent excuse.

After lunch they went home to change for dinner. While we were waiting, Holmes outlined his goals:

- Many men killed the pretty face, Watson, and I hope this trick will work with us. Said Peter Prince has a weakness for the fair sex. Let's see if he does not commit any mistake, flattered by the attention of the young ladies.

We took the four of us in a hired carriage to Regent Street and entered the "Cafe Royal". Holmes was accompanied by Cassandra, and I - Jane. I noticed how quiet Holmes spoke with a senior waiter and something shoved into his hand, after which we carried to a table in the back of the restaurant, located at some distance from the musicians.

- It is here usually prefer to sit Prince Peter, - he said with a smile, my friend. - It is convenient to monitor the entrance to the hall, and then quietly enough so that he could talk to your friends. They say he loves controversy and has a sharp mind like a blade.

We ordered tea and chatted while waiting for him. The girls stayed in the excitement. Twenty minutes later the head waiter sidled came to our table and asked in a whisper to the Sherlock Holmes:

- As I understand it, you want to you reported when Prince Peter arrives, sir. So now his lordship sent to us.

Looking toward the door, we saw a tall, thin man in immaculate evening dress. He had a narrow, very pale face, rather large nose and long whiskers. He was holding a silk hat and a pair of dark red gloves. In general, the man gave the impression of an elegant dandy.

- This is your chance, Miss Jane, - with a smile, said Holmes.

- Oh, no, I can not! - Jane trembled.

- Do not be so stupid as - reproached her sister. - If you do not you do that, then I do!

And with that, she got up and bravely went to intercept our facility.

- Prince Peter Kropotkin, I suppose? - She asked.

Russian smiled and bowed slightly raised eyebrows in polite disbelief.

- Forgive my obsession, your Excellency, but my friends and I - stalwarts cause of freedom, and we would consider it a great honor if you sat down at our table.

I saw the Russian glanced in our direction. His expression changed slightly when he saw the beauty of Jane. He smiled, showing very white teeth.

- On the contrary, it is an honor for me, mademoiselle, - said he with a subtle accent. - May I know your name?

- I Stivenc Cassandra, and this is my sister, Jane. With us are two very loyal friend - Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson.

We all stood up and greeted the prince standing.

Sitting at the table, he with a smile around us look, then ordered some liquor and persuaded by the girls tasted the sandwich, almost unbelievably thin, what this place was famous for.

- My sister and I publish a "Torch", - explained Cassandra - a small periodical, whose purpose - to encourage a rational discussion about the inequality in our society. We are the greatest interest to follow your performances and publications.

- Yes, I heard about your illustrious newspaper - courtesy of our guest lied. - Our business was lucky that he has such talented and beautiful supporters.

Within a few minutes we talked about the necessity and inevitability of social reform, then moved on to more personal matters: Prince Peter asked the girls about their progress towards anarchism and showered with praise. They were excited, their manners enchant his excellency. Jane, apparently hypnotized his high title, and Cassandra - the scope of activity of the prince. I'm afraid they are both excited at the thought of the atrocities that were attributed to him. I was bitter because an excellent example of English womanhood fascinated by this monster. But my role required me to hide my emotions.

I was reticent, but Holmes was talking, and thanks to extensive knowledge in various fields, including the current problems, he was able to some extent to guide the conversation. When Cassandra mentioned some lectures that are interested in it, Holmes is very laid-back tone mentioned weekly gatherings in the house of Ivan Koninskogo - famous nihilist.

- Oh yes, - Jane said breathlessly. - All have heard about these famous debates. As much as I wanted to get there - but you need an invitation, and we are not familiar with any of its terms.

- Maybe Peter Prince could provide you? - Holmes asked, bowing to the guest.

Kropotkin did not answer immediately. Perhaps, to give yourself time to think, he took out a cigarette case and took one of the long brown Russian cigarettes he loved. From another pocket he pulled a silver matchbox into a cylindrical shape with a lid in the form of a skull, gleamed with tiny rubies for eyes. Taking a wax match, he lit a cigarette.

- Alas, Madame, - with regret he turned to Jane - I'm afraid this time will not work. I ask for your understanding: in such high matters with which we are bound, my friends will not let me the slightest risk. I can not imagine you after such a short acquaintance. I hope we can meet again, and when we know each other better, I will be glad to accompany you personally. This time I came to England for a few days, in the case. Perhaps, in January, I guess to come back here, you let me once again to meet with you?

He leaned back in his chair and deeply protracted, elegantly blew a smoke ring.

- I have to be careful - he added languidly smiling Jane. His lips looked very red in his pale face. - Police spies everywhere. - He did not even look at us with Holmes, but I am convinced that he is laughing at us.

Girls approved his caution, while Holmes concealed his disappointment, politely expressing regret. Soon Russian-bye to us, bent low over the handles of our companions. We put the girls in a cab and went to the foot of Baker Street. My friend was in a bad mood: a week of investigation into the allotted time lost in vain. Upon arrival at the apartment, he silently sat down with a frozen expression. I thought it best to leave him alone and went about his business.

In the following days I saw little of Sherlock Holmes. Likely, he did forays into some of their fancy garb, trying to gather information from the servants. Finally one night I caught him with a letter in his hand.

- Just came a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, - he said grimly. - Tomorrow, our diplomat returns to London. And, unfortunately, I have to admit that failed. Kropotkin talking with everyone and does not say anything. He is everywhere and does nothing. I have not the slightest hint of who his followers. And I am not so optimistic to believe, if Lestrade with his constables able to outwit the man. Watson, I have a cat scratching on the

soul. I could still survive the damage done to my reputation, but the thought that my country will bleed as a result of my failure - that's what I can not stand. - He turned away from me, hanging his head.

- Well, well, Holmes - I said a gruff tone, lest he again resorted to a syringe with cocaine. - We were not lucky, but we can try again.

My friend did not deign to reply. I tried to make a joke:

- Miss Miss Jane and Cassandra were enthralled tive obscuring the horses, but perhaps it is a lightweight cover-up could not confuse our production.

My innocent joke had a tremendous effect. Sherlock Holmes turned to me so strongly that I even confused. He spoke quickly and excitedly:

- You hit the bullseye, Watson! Obscuring the horse! It's an old trick, when a hunter hiding behind being that considers mining harmless. But the situation was exactly the opposite: stalking horse was Prince Peter, and fooled us!

Seeing that I was confused, he explained:

- Kropotkin was summoned to London for the blind. He is always in sight, and all eyes are on him. Meanwhile, the real killers are taking measures to deal with him nothing. Yes, both sides will do everything possible, that it was impossible to discern the slightest connection between them. We must pay tribute to the police: the prince had no chance to escape from surveillance. All the forces have been thrown out to keep under surveillance the wrong person. And now we must ask ourselves: Who is the protagonist? You can just say that it is very different from Kropotkin. Keeping to the shadows, and not attending fancy restaurants. Avoid society, not rants at meetings.

I think we can find a clue. I need to immediately send a message to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Holmes hastily scribbled note, while I called the messenger, who was ordered to deliver it to the Secretary Lord Hawkesbury and wait for a response. In anticipation of Holmes himself could not find the place, but in fact it took less than an hour - amazing speed for a government official. My friend quickly ran the letter.

- Come on, Watson. It's time we pay a visit to Inspector Lestrade, and to recognize that we now share his views.

Scotland Yard told us that Lestrade and his men patrol Villiers Street near the "Savoy". Hastening there, we saw the inspector who interviewed with three constables.

- Lestrade - addressed him my friend, - I subscribe to your opinion. Prince Peter is not dangerous. I have come to humbly ask for your help. I need someone who can learn really dangerous anarchist on the verbal portrait.

Lestrade chuckled, rejoicing the heart.

- I knew that sooner or later you will need for the power of the police, Mr. Holmes. Well, I will be glad to do so, especially because in the past you have given me a couple of tips. Meet the constable Bluitom of special service [\[20\]](#) - he knows all the anarchists.

Phlegmatic Bluit nodded in agreement:

- Yes, sir, it is. Over the years, you learn the anarchists, their habits, people with whom they meet.

- Here I have - said Sherlock Holmes, - extract from the French police report regarding the mysterious guest from England. He stayed at the guest house, the owner of which is the service of the police. Informant said that this man could say in French, a few words, and spoke with an accent that landlady considered Russian. They communicated in English, that this man possessed freely. This is important, because all the Russian aristocracy spoke French. Therefore, we can conclude that he does not belong to the upper classes. He was wearing a coat trimmed with astrakhan, popular among the middle class in Russia, which can not afford an expensive fur. He is middle-aged, small in stature and wears a neatly trimmed goatee. The man begins to go bald and wears a hat to hide it. On the pale ink stains hands, so it is quite possible, the clerk.

Some time Constable gazed thoughtfully into space, rocking on his heels.

- A good description, sir. Under it is not suitable as we know a person, but I would say that this is Mr. Janowski. He takes care of his appearance, but because well-worn and covers his bald head. In our country for a long time. Fluent in English.

- Where is he now? Constable shook his head:

- He lived in Battersea, but lately I do not see him there. In fact, we rarely met him. It is a closed and secretive entity, very moody. To no one in particular deals. I heard that his wife

had died in a Russian prison, and since then he hates any authority. One thing in his favor: he does not shy away from work. He has a permanent service. He translates documents for companies that maintain business relations with Russia.

Suddenly, I remembered the words of Lord Hawkesbury: "My ministry had to hire three more translators."

- Holmes! - I cried, but my friend has rushed towards the Strand.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs! - He said over his shoulder to Lestrade. - Follow me as soon as possible! It is a matter of life and death!

Sherlock Holmes waved his arms, stopping the cab, which was approaching at a decent speed, and it is not just moved.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs! - He shouted. - Two sovereigns if whisk us there in five minutes!

Fortunately, the cabby was desperate and began smaller nahlestyvat horse without further ado. We are fairly risky, but, to my relief, soon proved to be the target. Holmes threw the coachman promised sovereigns and ran up the stairs to the ministerial.

- Do you have a translator on Yanovsky names? - He asked the doorman. - We need to immediately get to his office!

Porter only smiled indulgently. He was accustomed to the fact that people come here in the greatest of haste, and require immediate attention. Instead of answering, he reached for his pen and sheet of paper.

- Maybe this is, sir, and perhaps no. If you have helped me fill out this form, stating who you are and what is the case, I would have made sure that it was handed over to the responsible person. Maybe we'll start with your name and address, gentlemen?

At that moment in the lobby flew Lestrade and his constables.

- What kind of pandemonium ... - he began the porter, but Lestrade grabbed him by the collar.

- Come on, old man, - he growled. - Tell this gentleman what he wants, so hurry up, or I'll have you arrested!

The porter looked at him with an offended air and tried to protest, but in time to notice the grim look on his people in police uniforms. Then he came to his senses and called courier.

- Take these gentlemen in the office of Mr Janowski, Perkins, - he said, trying his best not to drop dignity.

- Hurry, son! - Admonished Lestrade courier. - Run! We are in a hurry!

The young man is very briskly ran up the stairs, and we could hardly keep up with him. On the second floor, he turned left and raced down the hall, like a hare. We ran after him, knocking out power, and finally tumbled together in a dusky room, littered with papers. In the corner stood a large wooden box with an impressive padlock.

- What is it? - Holmes asked, pointing to the box.

- It was brought yesterday to Mr Janowski, - said casually guy. - It's full of books and papers that he needed to work. Very heavy - it carried four people here. Mr. Janowski kept saying that they were careful.

Holmes grabbed the poker standing by the fireplace, and teased the castle. Jerk prying off constipation, my friend opened the lid.

It was a hell of a car in front of us. Box three-quarters filled with powder color of dirty chalk. On gunpowder dial lay down a cheap watch. Holmes opened cautiously round the door behind. By the malleus was attached a small cloth bag.

- Detonator - Holmes whispered, gently picking up a hammer and turning it. - Mercury fulminate, or some other substance. Well, I had secured!

The next day, a foreign diplomat returned to London and completed his mission successfully. The question of the colonies was settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

The police searched in vain bomber Yanovsky in his favorite places. Peter Prince returned to Paris a day after revelations bomber. Of course, it could not against any measures to be taken.

Lord Hawkesbury sent Holmes to thank him personally, and again stressed the need to observe the strictest secrecy in the public interest. He managed to achieve this. Nothing leaked out. No one knew about the failed attempt.

However, I found it remarkable that was introduced by the Bill on foreigners in the following months. Thanks to him, the authorities are empowered to check the reliability of those who have emigrated to the UK, before they will be allowed to disembark from the ship.

In introducing the bill in the House of Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke very eloquently. In his speech he said that our famous tolerance has meant that Britain became a haven unreliable and assassins who despise our ideals, taking advantage of the all the benefits.

The Case of the collector of antiquities

Our Holmes adventures played out in different scenery, but perhaps the most bizarre was the home of the famous collector of antiquities who lived in Bloomsbury, near the British Museum. It all began with the fact that Holmes delivered a note containing a request to come to Cini Square that morning, but why - it does not speak a word. Holmes asked if I was ready to accompany him, and got my agreement. Apart from the fact that the upcoming case intrigued me, I've been wanting at least a glimpse of the famed collection.

Having done all the way on foot - the house was not far from Baker Street - we found ourselves in an area surrounded by very tall and narrow houses made of bricks, blackened two centuries of London smog.

Lackey, opens the door for us, he was a swarthy, hawk features, and I imagined that he was Egyptian. We had expected. The waiter bowed led us down the hall, very large, with a huge sarcophagus in the center, roughly carved from marble in ancient times. With the look of the tomb ran across the many sculptures, part of Planting on pedestals, and then slid over a little strange, hanging on the walls and just put on the floor. Gaining them here so many that, despite the sizable dimensions of the hall, move on it was difficult. I twisted his head in admiration.

From there we proceeded to the second floor into a wonderful living room, which also holds many rare books. However, here, placed on the shelves, they do not interfere with travel. These were mainly tools that were used by ancient scholars. I noticed a few

astrolabes and a large magnificent planetarium. From the wide windows of the living room overlooks the beautiful park, adorned the square.

In the middle of the living room in a chair I sat an angry-looking old man in a rich, but second-hand clothes. It was clearly our client. Next to him sat on a chair beautiful young woman with blond hair. She was wearing a house dress dark brown. I assumed it was the daughter of the house owner. The servant bowed to his master and said,

- Mr Holm and Mr Utzon.

The old man did not get up.

- Sit down, gentlemen, - he suggested, pointing to a chair, standing on the sidelines.

Because the servant did not move to help us, we were forced to move the chairs.

- Actually, I really am Dr. Watson, - I said.

- I have no doubt that the way it is - bitterly said the old gentleman. - I am Sir Simon Hardwick, and I called you here for a very serious matter.

- Would you be so kind as to explain your problem? - Coldly I asked Holmes.

- I was robbed, Mr. Holmes - grouchy voice answered the old man. - Stole the precious manuscript which have revolutionized our views on certain period of British history.

- My God - my friend muttered. - Please tell us about the details.

- This letter, written on parchment, dated back to the sixth thousand five hundred eighty year. It was written by William Maitland Letingtonskim, state chancellor Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. The letter was stolen from my agent, attacking him.

The conversation broke in the young lady:

- Perhaps we should explain, Sir Simon, that your agent, Signor Ladrattso, charged with wearing any manuscript, which, in his opinion, may be of interest to you? He recently brought a series of letters Maitland, and yesterday evening was to deliver the latter. He was attacked, and a letter was stolen.

Holmes pursed his lips.

- So, strictly speaking, this letter is not your property? - He asked.

- This property Ladrattso, which he carried to me to sell, - impatiently snapped Sir Simon. - The legal side should not interest you.

- Very well, - I have agreed to my friend. - Where and when attacked him?

- Right in front of my own home! The taxes we pay for police, go down the drain. As for the time, it was about eight o'clock in the evening. Miss Latimer - he pointed to a young lady - the first was in place.

Miss Latimer, who, as I now realized, was not a relative, and the assistant of our customer, continued the story:

- Last night I heard the ringing of the door bell. Of course, it was already dark. As we expected Ladrattso Signora, I opened the door herself. To my horror, I saw that this gentleman on his forehead streaming blood. I immediately took him to the housekeeper's room and help him. He was hit hard on the head, and the skin was peeled off there. He said that when approached our door, he was attacked from behind and as he lay stunned, searched his pockets and stole the letter.

- How valuable was this letter? - Holmes asked.

- From the point of view of history, it is priceless - emphatically said Sir Simon. - I will reward you if you will return it to me. With regard to the cash value, - he continued with less pathos - I pay my agent five pounds in a letter.

Holmes made a pout.

- Apparently, it was strange to conceive theft, the risk of such a small amount, - he said. - What the letter said?

- I have no idea, - I sneered Sir Simon - because it was stolen before I acquired it.

- That's right, - said my friend, quietly. - And yet you have some ideas about its content, since you say that it would make a revolution in our view of history.

- Yes, of course - grouchy voice answered Sir Simon. - The letter was from the series that has fallen into my hands, so we can judge its content. If you remember, in the five hundred and eighty-fifth one thousand year Mary, Queen of Scots, was imprisoned at Chartley Castle. Always thought that Maitland was always loyal to his queen, but these letters to Baron Burghley indicate that, as the situation deteriorated Mary Stuart, he tried hard to gain the mercy of the English throne. It is possible that, in its further correspondence he gave Anthony Babington conspiracy, which had the aim of killing Queen Elizabeth, which led Mary to the scaffold!

Holmes did not shrug, as this would have caused the rage of his client.

- This letter is certainly of great historical interest, - he went on assignment, - but I'm baffled a few questions. Firstly, it is strange that found enthusiast who organized the attack to seize the letter. Do you know someone who is so obsessed with interest to the times of Elizabeth?

- Yeah, I know - Sir Simon hissed. - This is the charlatan from Dulwich, who fancies himself a great scientist, whereas in fact he layman, sir, just an amateur.

- Oh, - said Holmes thoughtfully, - I think I've heard of a gentleman, which you mentioned.

- Who has not? This subject has filled his house mummified bodies withered heads and stuffed animals. He gained fame in the ignorant public and became the laughing stock of all major antiquarians. The state acquired the grocery trade, allowed it to intercept the layman many valuable rarities have such serious collectors like me. He is absolutely unprincipled. And now, apparently, it felt to steal what can not buy.

- Well, we will certainly look at this possibility, - has agreed to Sherlock Holmes. - I also think that the attacker either extremely lucky or he knew in advance about the visit of an agent who has to deliver important documents you Elizabethan era. Who else did you discuss this matter?

Sir Simon and Ms. Latimer looked at each other.

- I think we mentioned it at the Gerre Shuldige - she suggested. - Sir Simon made an order of the company "Siemens", which shall carry out the electricity in the house, and Herr Shuldig oversees the work. It constantly happens in the house - in fact he is here now. As an educated man, he showed an interest in our collection. In addition he has a servant who lived in the house.

- Can I take this opportunity to talk to this gentleman? - Asked my friend.

Sir Simon rang the bell a footman, and soon Shuldig appeared before us in person. My first impression was unfavorable. It was a fat man with a double chin and shiny skin. He smiled ingratiatingly us clenched hands.

- Good morning - said Sherlock Holmes. - As I understand it, your task - to ensure that the benefits of home electric lighting?

- Yes it is. It is a great privilege and a great advantage for every educated person. As you know, in the gas vapors sulfur is present and a lot of water - even more than you think - and this may be detrimental to the wonderful books by Sir Simon. And, of course, there is the danger of fire. Electricity - the best way out.

- I fully agree with you: electricity - a great blessing. So you may have heard about the recent attack and theft. I understand that you have at this time was not in the house?

- No, I left about six hours. During the attack, I was at home. So, unfortunately, I can not tell you.

- Do you know the victim?

It seemed Shuldig ripples.

- No, - he finally said. - I've never seen - only heard about it from Sir Simon and Ms. Latimer.

- You mentioned it to someone?

- No no.It's not my business. My job - to electricity.

- Clearly, - said Holmes dryly. - Thank you for your assistance.

When Shuldig left, Holmes turned back to the client:

- Maybe he Signor Ladrattso boasted of his discovery, or the person with whom he is dealing, it was overly talkative. However, I know from experience that such people do not tend to spread about their affairs. Well, so far I have enough information to begin an

investigation. However, I ask you to lend me the last two letters of the series to be investigated.

Sir Simon gestured to Miss Latimer, and she, rising gracefully toward the wonderful desk, trimmed with black walnut. Unlocked the drawer, she took out two folded sheets of parchment, which gave my friend.

- As I see it, it is written in French, - he said, looking at the letter.

- Yes, Mr. Holmes, - confirmed the girl. - More precisely, it is Middle French, spoken and written from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The upper classes in Tudor times often written in French.

- It seems that you are well versed in Middle French?

- Of course. I studied the history of medieval and Elizabethan University College.

I must admit that I admired the combination of beauty and learning. It seemed to me the epitome of the famous poems of Tennyson, glorified "golden-haired virgins of scientists."

- Miss Latimer - my invaluable assistant, - admitted Sir Simon. - At the moment she is busy compiling a catalog of the Elizabethan era documents, which I bought at the auction.

Holmes rose.

- We wish you a good day, sir, - he said. - Make the report as soon as we can.

- First, visit the Italian? - I said, when we came out of the house.

- Not now, Watson. Do you often complained about in his stories on my cynical nature. I'm afraid my current actions do not make you change your mind. First of all, we will go to one of my friend to check the authenticity of these documents.

- Do you think that they are forged?

- Given the vague nature of the whole affair, I believe it is quite likely. Let's at least find out if they are genuine, and if it turns out that no, our clients have nothing to be upset because of the loss of the letters. He will only have to take care of that wretch returned the money.

Holmes led me to a dingy second-hand shop in Paid-Bull-yard, next to the British Museum. Making his way among the mountains of dusty volumes, we found a small niche in the back of the bench, where he sat for some wrinkled creature. It looked at us and smiled uncertainly.

- How, Mr. Holmes? What an honor for me that you are logged in!

- Good morning, Franklin - Holmes said. - I bought these sheets of parchment. Will you do me a favor to express their views about their origins?

Franklin silently took the documents and went with them to the window. He seemed to read them carefully. Then, by inserting a magnifying glass eye, what are jewelers, he began to study the parchment. Please explore the surface, then I turned the letter over to the light and began to examine. Returning to his desk, he took a sharp scalpel, surgeons serving for the most delicate operations, and scratched ink. In the end, he shrugged:

- In my opinion, they are genuine, Mr. Holmes. If you leave these documents, I would carry out further studies, but I doubt that it would have changed my opinion.

- But they can not be a palimpsest? [\[21\]](#)

- That's the first thing I check. One of the most common tricks - take a piece of priceless parchment, perhaps some ancient document, and scrape off the text. However, always remain traces. The surface is usually covered with tiny marks, and, in addition, almost always visible traces of the original text. In this case it is not, therefore, I conclude that parchment nothing before it started to write.

Now let's move to the ink. You have to understand, gentlemen, - he continued mentoring tone, - that in cases of this kind it is important to simulate the old days at the beginning, rather than trying to wear out the inscription later. For example, if you prepare the ink from oak nuts and gum arabic, as did our ancestors, it must be diluted before use, the ink seemed faded and discolored, do not try to written text. And, even when diluted, new inks adhere well to the parchment. Here I see that the ink is dry and crumble. Sure, they are very ripe old age. So, on the basis of the foregoing, I conclude that your letters - the originals of the era.

Holmes nodded and took the letter.

- Thank you, Franklin, - he said, and I was surprised by his disparaging tone. - You have given me valuable service.

Franklin smiled grimly. When we came out of the shop, Holmes said:

- Franklin - poacher-turned wood nothing, Watson. Once he so skillfully forged will, that he led me briefly. It occurred to me that someone with such valuable talents should not languish in prison, because it can be useful to me. I gave the one who ordered the forgery, and Franklin warned the police. But I clearly explained to him that another such crime will be his end. In gratitude for the service he helps me to deal with problems like today. Now he makes a living restoring ancient volumes. And if sometimes the restoration is, shall we say, an imaginary character, none of this is no great harm.

But back to our business. It becomes all the more interesting. Apparently, the original manuscript, so we can assume that the attack was real. Let us now let us enter the Library of the British Museum, all the more so to her doorstep, and learn expert opinion about the content of our emails.

The museum is located across the street from the shops of Franklin. Holmes led me through the large hall in the center, to the reading room. As always, I felt awed by its size and the huge glass dome over their heads. Holmes, who had a library card, often dropped in to the library to research the historical background of any business, when you do not have enough information in its own alphabetical directory.

We stand Holmes asked Professor Gray. This gentleman soon appeared and warmly shook hands with my friend.

- Hello, Mr. Holmes! How I can help you today? - he asked.

This elderly gentleman vigorous species is quite consistent with the widespread perception of the professor, certainly, bearded, in a tweed suit.

- Hello, Professor! I have entrusted the letters allegedly written by William Maitland Letingtonskim. I would be immensely grateful to you if you felt about their content.

Taking the letter, Professor Gray began to read.

- Hmm, very interesting! - He said at last. - Did you know that for their deceit William Maitland was nicknamed Makiuilli - from Machiavelli. A very successful play on words! He was implicated in a plot to kill David Rizzio, the personal secretary of the Queen Mary and is rumored to be her lover. Despite this, he managed to regain the layout of the queen, and later he was with her in the important state positions. One time Maitland was Mary's

ambassador to England and, of course, made many friends among the nobility Tarabya. According to these letters, he served and hunt with the hounds.

While Holmes spoke with a professor, I looked to the side and noticed flashed a familiar profile.

- Oh, Herr Shuldig! - I cried. - What a surprise - to see you here!

Shuldig started and stopped abruptly. Turning to me, he said, with obsequious smile:

- Dr. Watson! - His full cheeks glistened with sweat. - How nice to see you again so soon!

- You here on business?

- Yes of course! "Siemens" Company conducts electricity and in the library. The most amazing collection in the world! It is a great honor for us. But excuse me, I'm in a hurry on the case: in this big building so much work.

- Of course.

Holmes noticed that I was talking to a German.

- We met with Herr Shuldigom today in the house of one of our customers - he said casually professor when the fat man hurried away. - Apparently, he knows his business.

- Of course. Priceless Specialist! Perhaps you do not remember, Mr. Holmes, but ten years ago it was dark and gloomy in the library. Only one gas lamp was burning under the dome, and in the gloomy and foggy days we could not work here. And, of course, there was always the threat of a terrible fire, which would cause incredible damage.

Fortunately, now all in the past. Electric light allows us to work at any time, and we do not depend more on the vagaries of climate and time of year. However, readers who are accustomed to the gas lighting, complain, oddly enough, the fact that the electric light is too bright!

- The changes are difficult at first - said Sherlock Holmes. - Allow me to express to you my sincere gratitude for their support. Your knowledge has always been amazing.

- Are you in a hurry? I would really like to take this opportunity to make copies of these letters. Of course, if there is no objection.

- I think my client will not mind - kindly said Holmes.

And, though I was less optimistic, knowing Sir Simon proprietary respect to manuscripts, I thought it best to remain silent.

While Professor Gray made copies, Holmes and I sat on the leather couch, talking in a low voice so as not to interfere with the readers.

- You have made any conclusions? - I inquired.

- I'm still not clear motive of theft, - I complained to a friend of mine. - If the attacker was in need of a relatively small amount of money, why not just robbed some rich drunk on a dark street in SoHo, pulled out his wallet? Obviously, it had to be this particular letter. But it is unlikely someone so interested in writing Elizabethan, unless they are written in one of the monarchs of the time.

- Maybe all the importance of the letter is written on parchment? - I suggested. - For example, if the stolen letter sheds light on the dishonorable act committed by members of the aristocracy of the time, then it is possible that a descendant wanted at all costs to protect the good name of his family.

- Four hundred years later? I doubt it. Even the most outrageous scandal is covered with a romantic patina for such a long time. Duke St. Olbensky quietly sits in the House of Lords, and does not believe that it harms the dignity of the relationship with the beautiful but dissolute Nell Gwyn ^[22].

- What about the theory of Sir Simon, what's involved his opponent, a collector from Dulwich?

- I do not take it seriously, Watson. Mania of collecting takes many forms in humans. Interests collector from Dulwich lie mainly in the field of anthropology: he appreciates the exotic. I doubt that he was interested in a piece of parchment Elizabethan times, what would it has been written. Furthermore, while collectors are not choosy in the means when hunting for prey, I doubt that it came to theft.

I suspect that most likely the letter was stolen for ransom and soon Sir Simon will require a large amount - probably threatening to destroy a letter if he does not pay. In this case, it

will be clear that this is not a random theft: scoundrel knew that doing and built his calculation on mania collectors who will pay as much as necessary, just to collect the entire series.

Twenty minutes later, Professor Gray came back with our originals. The two sides exchanged thanked, and we found ourselves again in the wide courtyard of the museum.

- I think we have time before tea to visit the Italian, - said Holmes. He waved his cane kebu.
- Saffron Hill! - He shouted kebmenu.

At Saffron Hill, a long and narrow muddy street separating from Holborn Clerkenwell, recently began to settle Italians. The organ-grinder, ice cream vendors, musicians, artists - in other words, representatives of the typical Italian Job found shelter here.

Having stopped the cab in a long time not painted, peeling door, we knocked. He reveals to us a young woman who looked at us with wary suspicion.

- We Signora Ladrattso, - explained to us.

She did not say - probably not talked in English or understood, but it is bad. However, the name Ladrattso she still said something, and coming up to the foot of the stairs, the woman called out:

- Luigi!

A few minutes later the door opened and a young man came down the stairs. He was handsome in the Italian spirit: the head of the young David and tight curls.

Ladrattso eyed us suspiciously.

Holmes bowed and asked:

- Signor Ladrattso, as I understand it? We hired Sir Simon, so we dealt with the theft of his letters. Can we come in and ask you a few questions?

It seemed that the Italian would gladly have denied us this request, but does not dare.

- Come to my room - he articulated not willingly, he turned and headed there first.

Climbing up the dirty wooden stairs to the second floor, we went to his room. Ladrattso pointed to a battered sofa, and we sat down on him, he himself sat on the bed. The room was incredibly dirty and cluttered. However, there were found signs of occupation of scientists, or at least trade in antiques: books piled everywhere mountains in leather bindings and parchment manuscripts ligament.

- Can I first of all ask, sir, - started Sherlock Holmes - when you started working on Sir Simon?

- Probably a year ago.

- And it's always been Elizabethan manuscript?

- No. At first I brought him incunabula [\[23\]](#). The old prayer books from Germany.

- And when you are offered a series of Elizabethan letters?

Ladrattso pondered and replied after a pause:

- In January.

- So, three months ago? - Yes.

- And what was the source of these documents?

Italian slyly looked at Holmes

- If I tell you, you can get the letters themselves and seize my deal. This is a commercial secret.

- So you told no more about the existence of these letters?

- No, I have kept it a secret.

- The robber knew that when you valuable letter, and was aware of the time in which you expect to Cinisi Square. Who could it be?

Ladrattso shrugged:

- How should I know? Maybe here it is a woman, Miss Latimer? Women are so talkative.

- She and Sir Simon claim that no one said anything.

- Well, then I do not know - persisted Italian. Holmes continued to ask questions, but it was clear that we do not pull out of the man nothing substantial. In the end, my friend stood up and bowed

- Thank you for your help, sir Ladrattso. I hope we do not need more trouble you. I can assure you that will make every effort to bring to justice the villain who attacked you.

Perhaps it is my imagination, but it seemed to me that in the face of a young man ran a shadow of anxiety.

After leaving the house, we went towards the Clerkenwell Road in search of a cab.

- We have earned our tea, Watson, - said my friend. - Let's go back to Baker Street and see what we can offer, Mrs. Hudson.

The next day, early in the morning we got another categorical message from Sir Simon, saying that he demand a ransom for the stolen letter.

Holmes was a contented look.

- As I predicted, Watson, a letter was stolen for ransom. Now it can be clarified. Much can be learned from the most dispatches ransom, and the exchange of money for the stolen items have plenty of opportunities to grab rogue. So, go ahead!

When we arrived, a servant opened the door, he said that Sir Simon in his office and invited us there. We followed the servant up the stairs - this time to the third floor. The path from the landing was through the archway with a decorative metal grille, which is definitely a once guarded the entrance to the harem of the great caliph. I'm a few minutes ahead of Holmes, who lingered on the stairs, looking at Hogarth's engravings.

Going after the footman under the arch, which was quite narrow, I accidentally touched the lattice. And immediately all pierced me terrible pain, which intensified even when my hand involuntarily clenched metal. I tried to draw back his hand, but my muscles would not obey. My body began to writhe in convulsions. I tried to scream, but his throat choked out a squeak. Because wild writhing, I came into contact with the pedestal. Strong blow on

him, I saw that the statue standing on it begins to fall. It capsized, and under the weight of marble thrown me on the carpet. In the fall, I involuntarily let go of the bars. The pain immediately decreased, even though I felt much hurt himself.

I heard footsteps on the stairs - Holmes in two jumps appeared beside me.

- Watson! - He shouted, dropping to his knees and bent over me. - For God's sake, what happened?

I was unable to speak and only silently pointed to the light bulb above his head, and on the grid. Holmes immediately realized that I was trying to tell him.

- Electricity! - He muttered.

There were footsteps on the other side, and there was Sir Simon, troubled by noise. When he looked around the whole scene, his features contorted with shock and fear.

- My Venus! - He cried bitterly. - It is damaged? - Rushing to the fallen statue, he knelt down to inspect it. - No, no, it is still intact! - He said at last. - You're not broke, my beauty, not even a tiny piece broke. You saved the carpet, huh? Clever! - He almost voluptuously stroked the white marble.

Holmes looked at the collector with disgust:

- Watson suffered from shock, Sir Simon. Do not touch anything metal. Where Herr Shuldig?

- Recently was here, - said Sir Simon, looking up. - I think he was testing a new lighting system in the blue lounge.

- Will you do a favor by sending him? A few minutes later came Shuldig. By that time I already had the strength to sit up.

- Herr Shuldig - grimly said Holmes - Watson electric shock from this grid. It seems that in your jurisdiction?

- Oh, yes, I see. What a misfortune! - Humbly lamented German. - I would ask you all to remain seated until I I disable current. - And he hurried away.

- How can I help you, old man? - Asked Sherlock Holmes.

- Just leave me a short time, Holmes. The pain from the electric shock will soon pass. I apparently hurt himself and burned his palm.

Soon he returned Shuldig. Turning to him, Holmes said:

- Do not you deign to check how this could happen, Herr Shuldig? The results could be very dire.

- Oh sure. I'll do it immediately! - Blurted Shuldig German. - It must be the case in the new wiring. Yes! Look - insulation broke in the very spot where the wire passes near the lattice. What bad luck! I can not imagine how it happened.

- Really! - Cried Holmes, and his voice sounded incredulous. Bending down, he looked at the lead, touched it and turned it over in his hands. - Hmm! It is better to insulate it immediately. Come on, Doctor. If you are able to get up, I'll help you to get to our apartment, where you will be able to recuperate.

- Do you suspect foul play, Holmes? - I whispered softly, going down with the help of the stairs.

- Maybe - Holmes said, lowering his voice, too. - If so, it was very cleverly done. Isolation wires apparently Easterly in the place where it extends from the lattice itself. Lackey was protected because it wearing gloves. A person who rigged trap, understand electricity.

- So it Shuldig? - I asked.

- Such a conclusion seems most likely. Undoubtedly, the trap was meant for me. The risk of a disproportionate - because it comes a piece of old parchment! However, let's go home on Baker Street. There you can lie down, and Mrs. Hudson made us to drink tea.

We arrived at the home in a cab, and there my friend, get comfortable I went to inquire about tea. When he returned, he sat down in his favorite chair, filled his pipe with tobacco, and began thoughtfully to let out smoke rings.

- Over the past twenty years, we have a huge distance, Watson - he mused. - When in the seventies I studied natural sciences at Cambridge, an electric current is hardly mentioned. This phenomenon is very little applied outside the laboratory - for generators just

invented. Now, of course, we have seen everywhere and its benefits, as you have just discovered, also disadvantages!

Holmes was silent and lost in thought, thinking about all aspects of the problem. Well aware of his habits, I did not disturb him, and took up tea and a newspaper, trying not to rustle the pages. I do not know how much time passed - perhaps I dozed off after the morning troubles. I woke up when my friend with shouting jumped from his chair.

Holmes rushed to the bookcases, as is often done, wanting to check some fact. However, to my surprise, he did not learn that from his vast collection, and walked over to a shelf on which stood my few books on medicine. He chose a treatise on the skin and, sitting down, he began to flip through it. Ten minutes later, he put the book down and turned to me.

- You came to their senses, Watson?

- Yes, it is, thank you. You want again somewhere to go?

- I intend to return to Cinisi Square, the doctor! I need to ask Sir Simon very important question!

We hurried to the client's home, and we immediately conducted to it. Holmes immediately took the bull by the horns.

- Sir Simon - he asked - you were present when Miss Latimer heal Signora Ladrattso?

- Yes, almost all the time. Hearing the noise, I followed them to the housekeeper's room, where Miss Latimer assisted the unfortunate young man.

- And you have not noticed, there was a lot of blood?

- Little. I clearly remember that, worrying about their Persian rug, was just about to order his servant removed. But then I noticed that this is not necessary, since there was very little blood.

- Excellent! - Exclaimed Holmes, much to my surprise. - Would not it be so kind as to send for Signor Ladrattso and ask him to come immediately? I think that with his help we could clarify this issue. And, probably, it would be necessary to send and Ms. Latimer: I think it is also able to help us.

Sir Simon gave the orders, and we waited for almost an hour, until the Italian arrived. All this time we were trying to pull something out of Holmes, but he was adamant: if my friend is a weakness, because it is his love for the dramatic denouement.

Finally, there was an Italian, moody and dissatisfied.

- Signor Ladrattso! - Acclaimed Holmes, springing from his seat. - I am very glad to see you. Would you be so kind as to kneel?

Ladrattso retreated, his face contorted with rage.

Holmes just smiled and quickly took a step toward him. Grabbing the Italian's hand, he unscrewed it, and possessing great power, forced to his knees. Ladrattso cried out in pain and anger. Sir Simon stood up, but in the confusion nothing could protest.

- And now, Watson, - said Holmes, holding the Italian on the floor - if you inspect the wound?

I knelt down next to Ladrattso. He struggled, but he held fast. I shared his thick hair, characteristic of the Mediterranean peoples. Carefully check the scalp, I was amazed.

- Do not, Holmes. I could not find any lacerations. But even scratch the surface could not heal in such a short time!

- A no injury and was not! How many Southerners, he is too cowardly to even hurt themselves for the cause. What did you use, sir Ladrattso? A piece of raw meat? Head smeared in blood before knocking on the door?

He let go of the Italian, who jumped from the floor and was now standing, fists clenched and shaking with anger.

- When Sir Simon told us that there was little blood, I guessed what had happened. The wound on the scalp bleeds profusely - not you, doctor? - Because the skin in this place is well supplied with blood and its blood vessels are not reduced, as in other parts of the body.

And, of course, - he continued Sherlock Holmes, abruptly turning to Miss Latimer, who sat frozen with a pale face, - it betrays your assistant. She acted in collusion with the Italian. So, madam? - He said coldly, without receiving a response from her. - You have nothing to say?

She remained silent, and Holmes turned to Sir Simon:

- In my opinion, sir, you will find that the letters you have purchased Ladrattso lies in one of those chords that you purchased at an auction. A catalog, Miss Latimer came across the letter you are interested in Elizabethan period. Rather than bring them to your attention, she conspired with the Italian deceive you.

It is clear that for some time they were lovers. In the end, it is not the first young woman who was bewitched southern beauty and violent passions. For a while, everything was going well, but then they decided that five pounds for the letter - it is not enough. Then they simulated attack, hoping that a natural desire to complete a series of collector will allow them to ask for a large sum for the return letter.

After my visit to Ladrattso he decided that I represent a danger to him, and set out to destroy me. He had the idea to take advantage of the fact that in the house of conduct electricity. Do not forget that the Italians discovered electricity. Our friend, apparently, has a versatile talent and is not devoid of intelligence. Interestingly, I do not learn if he had something in his native country at the Galvani followers [\[24\]](#) and Professor Volta [\[25\]](#) ? I suppose, Miss Latimer today held secretly in his house, when in front of the house was empty. Perhaps during breakfast. Signor Ladrattso set a trap, and then made sure that Sir Simon delivered a letter demanding ransom, knowing that I was immediately called.

And now, Sir Simon, if you sent the servants to the nearest police station, we could arrest the couple on charges of theft and fraud.

Our client, appears to have been shocked by these revelations. He did not respond to the invitation of my friend, staring at the floor and shook his head slowly. After a while he looked up at the criminal couple.

- Get out! - He cried furiously. - Go away now, and that I have never seen!

Ladrattso turned and immediately rushed to the door. Miss Latimer was not long pray and followed him. It was clear that they were going to take advantage of the generosity of Sir Simon.

Holmes turned to our customer with raised eyebrows:

- If you do not want to press charges, sir, I can not do anything. However, I must say that you make a mistake, letting go unpunished such notorious villains.

Sir Simon seemed suddenly old and haggard.

- They were my friends, Mr. Holmes, - he said sadly, - my associates. I never would have thought that they could bring me so. Send your score - I do not poskuplyus. You did what I asked.

As for you, Dr. Watson, I will be grateful to you if you do not connect this painful episode to the collection of sensational stories that entertain undemanding readers. And now I must ask both of you to leave me.

I nodded in agreement, and we said goodbye once and for all with our client.

The case of the wife of the Pawnbroker

It was a warm day in early autumn, and we ended up with Sherlock Holmes breakfast at Baker Street.

- Upon my word, Watson, - said a friend of mine - Today is too good weather to sit at home. Let's take a walk in Regent's Park, the benefit of it across the road. After wandering around the lake, we admire the flowers and other natural beauty.

I expressed consent hot, but then Mrs Hudson, which became to clear the table, Holmes said:

- The young lady wants to see you, sir. I told her that you eat breakfast, and asked him to wait in the living room.

- Thank you, Mrs. Hudson. What an energetic young lady - so early in the beginning of the day. I doubt that she is living in idleness.

Seeing the girl, I realized that Holmes hunch is correct. The stranger was neat, but simply dressed. Expression serious, though, in my opinion, and not too downcast. Noticing that her finger no wedding ring, I suggested that there were involved matters of the heart.

- Thank you for what you have agreed to receive me, sir, - she said. - My name - Mary Franklin. I came to you because I am concerned about one thing, though, it may be that this is just a coincidence. I really need your advice.

- Tell us all about it - asked Holmes, leaning back in his chair and closing his eyes.

- Well, sir, first of all, I must say that my father died and I live with his mother and her second husband in Highgate. Next to us is the moneylender's shop, Mr. Sharp, who lends money to bail. He is very friendly with my stepfather, and they often drink together in the nearest tavern.

Two months ago, the wife of Mr. Sharpe died suddenly of heart failure. She was not an old woman, so that gave her struck me: we often met and talked. In addition, this happened in the absence of her husband - he left for a few days on business, which in my memory has not yet happened. Her husband found her dead when he returned. I shudder, Mr. Holmes, when I think that she was lying dead almost behind the wall of my bedroom and there was no one by her side.

After the funeral, Mr. Sharpe not very much grieved. And soon he began to take care of me. I must say that I was not encouraged. Perhaps it is foolish of me: he is undoubtedly an honest and hardworking man, but I find it repulsive appearance and manners. Finally, he had the courage to ask for my hand. I barely suppressed a shudder at the thought of how to share life with him, and said that, although very grateful for the offer, I can not bring myself to love him. He only said that is probably too early to speak about marriage, and after some time, obtain my consent again.

My stepfather at every opportunity paints benefits to be gained from my marriage to moneylender. All repeats, it is better to live in prosperity, rather than marry the poor young man - because then my life will not be easy. Of course, all this is correct, but I have not listened to his advice is. In fact, I suspect that my stepfather tries not without self-interest. The fact that the late father left me our house with the condition that I could not sell it if the mother's life. For me, the stepfather conspired with Mr. Sharpe, having secured a promise that if our marriage that would allow him to continue living in the house I inherited.

Still without opening her eyes, Holmes asked:

- Is there a reason to doubt that the death was due to natural causes?

- No, sir, - said the young lady, after a short pause. - Since the moneylender's wife died suddenly, performed the autopsy. However, it did not the doctor, Mrs. Sharpe - at the time he made the journey north through France - and respectable local physician, Dr. Fletcher. At the inquest verdict was death due to cardiac arrest.

My friend opened his eyes.

- My dear young lady, - he said - I understand your predicament and you are very sorry, but what can help here consulting detective? Mr. Sharpe was not the first man, which attracts ladies much younger than him, and, as a widower, he is free to seek your favor. You can always refuse him.

- But there is a strange coincidence, Mr. Holmes. It often happens that customers moneylender can not redeem your mortgage, and then after some time it is sold. One afternoon, a week before his death, Mrs Sharpe, I saw how beautiful she hangs out to dry funeral suit. We talked through the garden fence, and she said that her husband asked her to wash and pat the suit before it put up for sale. The next time I saw this costume on Mr. Sharp, as he stood at the grave of his wife at Highgate Cemetery. She made him clothes for their own funeral! - The girl's face clouded with horror at the memory.

- Of course, it could just be an ominous coincidence, - says Holmes. - And yet, I'll take your case, Miss Franklin. It promises to be quite interesting. We were going to walk with Watson in Regent's Park, but the fresh air Highgate, located on a hill, no worse, and perhaps even better. If you will, we will accompany you to the house and consider the matter at its source.

An hour later we arrived at Highgate. At the request of Ms. Franklin stopped the cab on the High Street: she explained that the neighbors saw her coming out of a hired crew, certainly will gossip. We went down the hill to the West Paliment Hill Fields. One of the coolest streets led us to the house of Miss Franklin.

- I can not invite you to her, sir, - she apologized. - Stepfather angry at me for what I devote outsiders into private affairs.

- I understand. We will carry out a little investigation and meet you later to discuss issues that may arise. Where it would be convenient to see?

- Cafe Pritchett on the High Street - a very respectable institution, - the girl said.

- Perfectly. Let's say, three hours?

Miss Franklin has left us, Holmes said: - The obvious starting point - shop moneylender. Let's go back and look at this Mr. Sharpe.

We went into the dark shop. From old clothes came musty smell that many poor people laid a coat in summer and redeemed with the onset of cold weather. On the shelves of numerous watches and fine jewelery were displayed behind the counter. There were here

and small musical instruments such as the violin and concertina. In the window I saw a cheap stones: opals, black amber, amethyst, moonstones, malachite. From the back of the shop he went moneylender. Seeing the two well-dressed men, he bowed, rubbing his hands. He could not hide behind a subservient smile anxiety: he was afraid that we may be the authorities.

- Good morning, gentlemen, - he said to us. - How can I help you?

- I'm a collector of curiosities - without hesitation replied Holmes. - Accidentally passing by your shop and went to look, do not you have something curious.

- I'm always happy to help Antiquaries, since he is no stranger to this passion, sir, - said obsequiously Sharpe. - Unfortunately, in a place like ours, comes not so many rarities. You would be more lucky in Deptford and Greenwich, where the sailors go. Nevertheless I have a few superb gizmos that could be of interest to such a gentleman like you. For example, over there, sir, - he pointed to the corner shop, littered with various objects - kept some very interesting things collected from the late Colonel Thomas Southwood-house, when, together with the Welsh Guards was in South Africa. I was lucky enough to buy them after the death of Colonel during the sale at auction of his property.

Please take a look at this throne tribal leader, carved out of ebony. Note his weight and hardness. What is not a chair for the gentleman? It will decorate the dining room or office. Here - some idols, also mostly made of ebony. - He pointed to the intricately painted idols in two or three feet tall with very thin, long faces and disproportionately big lips. - Note how the primitive strength comes from these figures, sir. Perhaps they are not good for the house, which has a mistress, but would look stunning in a bachelor apartment.

- And this? - Holmes asked, nodding toward some kind of weapon, apparently also of African descent.

- Oh, yes, sir! - Sharpe said. - The perfect weapon again of Colonel Thomas collection. A complete set of weapons Zulu warrior - and take a look at the dart board. In very good condition, sir, and, moreover, a remarkable work.

Holmes nodded casually: - Really wonderful things, but they are unlikely to fit into my collection.

He wandered around the store a bit, peering to some subjects. Knowing my friend, I have no doubt that he is trying to learn everything I can about the preferences and income of Mr. Sharpe. Finally Holmes spoke again to the moneylender:

- I live about two miles from here. If I want to brought me a chair, it can be arranged?

- Of course, sir, - eagerly Sharpe said, as the seat is clearly worth the expensive. - I have a very comfortable hand truck to transport large items.

Apparently, Holmes was about to leave.

- Thank you, Mr. Sharpe, that we have spent time - he said politely. - Some things are definitely of interest. I thought if I did not buy anything.

Pawnbroker accompanied us, and we went back the same way.

I was burning with curiosity, and as soon as we withdrew to a safe distance, inquired:

- Well, Holmes, what did you find? Holmes raised his eyebrows quizzically.

- Very little - about our business, Watson. We could not talk to this person about his romantic inclinations? However, I noticed something interesting when viewed Zulu weapons.

- Indeed? - I asked doubtfully. - And what is the thing that is wrong?

- It is better to ask how things are lacking. There have been clubs with a heavy knob. It has become an indispensable weapon all Zulu warrior after Chuck Great [\[26\]](#) Armed with batons and his men made their storm the Dark Continent. This weapon had to wear each soldier, and the colonel could not include it in his collection.

- But Mrs. Sharpe was not killed by a baton or some other weapon, - I replied.

- Correctly. Perhaps this fact is not important, but it still begs the question. And here, Watson, our paths diverge. I'm going to bring some inquiries about Mr. and Mrs. Sharpe, while you do me a big favor if you come to visit his colleague, Dr. Fletcher.

- I understand, Holmes! - Escaped me excited exclamation. - The doctor who made the autopsy, is about to retire. Perhaps he feeds addiction to alcohol - well, anyway, is not competent. Sharpe quite reasonably expected that the physician will not notice any trick or closes her eyes to him.

Holmes smiled sardonically:

- Plausible theory, Watson. Perhaps you'll be kind enough to put a professional visit to this gentleman to check your guess?

I again began to climb up the hill - to the Pond Square. There's a beautiful Georgian-style mansion was receiving Dr. Fletcher. The doctor was a tall, well-built man. His whole appearance spoke of prosperity, and it barely passed middle age. In short, my theory about addiction to drinking and dissolute lifestyle was untenable.

- And, Doctor Watson - he warmly welcomed me - I'm always pleased to see a colleague. Do not drink tea, do we, as long as you express your business?

I agreed, and we began to exchange pleasantries and remarks relatively mild weather. Finally the maid wheeled trolley with everything you need for tea and left. I spoke about Mrs. Sharpe, posing as a distant relative, to explain his interest in her.

- Oh, - said Dr. Fletcher - I remember the case. I did not know the lady, but we are with Dr. Smith often substitute for each other by mutual agreement. He prefers to rest in early summer, when not hot, and I - late, and it is very convenient for both of us. When I was called, Mrs. Sharpe had been dead for several days. Unfortunately, her husband was away on business, and found that she had died, but on his return. Unfortunate event and a terrible shock for the poor man. I am officially confirmed his death and ordered that her remains were taken to the Royal Free Hospital for autopsy. I was present at the inquiry and testified. But the autopsy left no doubt: the cause of death was cardiac arrest.

I questioned what was generally the health of Mrs. Sharpe. Obviously, before her doctor did not observe any alarming symptoms, such as palpitations or shortness of breath, but they are not necessarily present in heart disease. After exchanging pleasantries with the last good doctor, I took leave with a heavy heart and went to a meeting with a friend.

It was clear that Miss Franklin, to which I have harbored warm feelings, just clinging at straws. So I said to Holmes.

- I can not agree with you, Watson, - he said firmly. - In my opinion, too much of a coincidence. Look: Lady dies when her husband is away. And yet he had never left home. Death catches up with her in the same month that her doctor usually spends abroad. Prepared even mourning costume suitable size. No, Watson, I am convinced that there is unclean.

- But the inquiry, Holmes - I did not give up. - Doctor's conclusion leaves no doubt. he knew it or not, Dr. Fletcher - experienced professional, who could not help but notice that it is unclear. At ignorant of the intricacies of criminal money-lender had no chance to twist him around her little finger - given the achievements of forensic medicine, which you yourself have made a significant contribution.

- You are, as always, flatter me, Watson. However, let's go. Now lunch time, time for us to meet with Ms. Franklin Cafe Pritchett.

Once settled in the coffee shop, where they served a simple but well-prepared food, Holmes, making the order, addressed to Miss Franklin:

- I would like to know more about the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Sharpe. They were a friendly couple?

- I think not, Mr. Holmes, though she did not hear that they were quarreling. Mrs. Sharpe belonged to her husband a few dismissive and often complained that he was stingy, not only gives her pocket money. She was a woman of fashion, fashionista and, I think, thought the usurer unsuccessful party.

- Interesting. Tell me, do you know the name of her dressmaker?

- Of course. Mrs. Sharpe often mentioned it. This is a Mrs. Eliza Mortimer, which owns the shop on the High Street, near the cafe, where we sit.

- Another issue - continued Holmes. - Mr Sharp told me that he had a hand truck. Do you know, by chance, where he keeps it?

- I know, sir. It is kept in the Townsend-yard, stables, owned by a blacksmith who shoeing horses. Mr. Sharpe often carries on this trolley furniture and other heavy or bulky items to save on the Teamsters.

We have talked on various topics. Miss Franklin shared with us the hope to get a place in Highgate construction company, where there is a vacancy - there she agreed to an interview.

We did not stay too long in the cafe, as Holmes could not wait to continue the investigation. Leaving the young lady, Holmes told her goodbye:

- I do that in the very beginning, Miss Franklin, but I feel that, quite possibly, will be able to help you. I'll get back to you tomorrow, if there is such a possibility.

When we said goodbye, Holmes said:

- And now, Watson, let's go and see Mrs Mortimer and see not razzhivitsya Do dressmaker what some useful information.

A walk down the High Street, we can easily find a shop, the owner of which came to us herself. It was the high haughty woman whose manner of dress seemed too extravagant, as well as plenty of paint on her face. We felt that she was pleased to accept the gentlemen.

Holmes bowed

- Mrs. Mortimer? We represent the soul of the deceased clerks Mrs. Dorothy Sharpe. As we understand it, on account of its outstanding amounts have.

Mrs. Mortimer immediately melted away from such a beginning.

- Let's go, please, to my office, gentlemen. There we will be able to talk in more comfortable surroundings.

We went into her office, close and untidy. Paper work is clearly not a strong point of this lady. Almost all the desk took great account book. We sat down, and as a preamble to Mrs. Mortimer, wringing her hands, said heartfelt tone:

- I was killed, when he heard of her death. It was not just my client and dear friend. Alas, gentlemen, it is too early to have taken away from family and friends, but everything is in the hands of the all-seeing Providence!

We mumbled something in agreement, and Mrs. Mortimer sighed and turned her attention to the ledger. Looking back, she told us:

- At the time of her tragic death, through Mrs. Sharpe was three pounds two shillings four pence per new summer output dress she ordered and had time to try, but, unfortunately, failed to pick up.

- May I take a look at it? - Asked Holmes.

The dressmaker gave us a book, and my friend thoroughly studied it. I saw that he held a full page list ordered toilets. Knowing the methods of Holmes, I do not doubt that he will take the opportunity to find out all about the account of Mrs. Sharpe.

- Here, it seems, all in perfect order, Madam, - he finally said. - Tell me, you were talking about this bill Mr. Sharpe?

Mrs. Mortimer grimaced:

- Yes, sir, of course - after waiting quite a while after the funeral. Mr. Sharpe was extremely nelyubezen: he said that his wife had left a lot of debt and he needs to think about this question. It is not only non-business approach, but, in my opinion, is also disrespectful to the memory of his dead wife.

Sherlock Holmes nodded, expressing sympathy.

- Understand and us: we can not repay the money as long as we do not have a clear idea of all the debts, - he explained. - I hope we will be able in due course to repay all the debts.

Taking notes, my friend, is that recorded. Then he got up, and we are with Mrs. Mortimer followed suit.

- Thank you for your assistance, Madam, - he said politely. - Soon we will contact you.

Mrs. Mortimer took us to the door with a welcoming smile.

- Large, Holmes - I said. - And judging by the fact that the lady said Mrs. Sharpe freely dispose of money. Apparently, she was pretty extravagant for a woman in her position. And you did not suspect that her husband has the means, he carefully hides?

- Let's not jump to conclusions, Watson, until we have the facts appear, - Holmes pulled me. - However, the forward, we need to see some others - the very Mrs Sharpe!

It had to go far, but the road is a steep climb up the hill. Finally we got to Sueynz Lane and up to the entrance to Highgate Cemetery, which is a narrow path divides into two parts. At the cemetery, we asked the guard how to get to the grave of Mrs. Sharpe. He took us there, and otshagav half a mile, we came to the area with the recent burials. Our path lay by a large number of marble statues. There were in abundance and traditional angels, and broken columns, but there were also more original tombstone: firefighter helmet on the grave of a brave man who gave his life in the performance of his duty; large marble on the

tomb of a grand piano pianist; Some of the deceased etched in marble with their faithful dogs. The cemetery contained in perfect order: clean tidy, the grass weed. Some tombs were approaching the size of a small house.

Finally we come to the grave of Mrs. Sharpe. In plain headstone were engraved the name of the woman, her age and date of death, as well as the traditional quotation from Scripture. Perhaps it was a worthy tomb for the wife of a small shopkeeper. Perhaps, Mr. Sharpe did not want to gain notoriety, burying his wife as a beggar.

Then again, I had to climb the mountain. However, such a walk in the fresh air had to go in our favor.

Reaching the South Grove, that is at the end Sueynz Lane, Holmes paused for a moment and said,

- We go back to Baker Street, Watson. This case should be consider, smoked a couple of tubes!

Upon returning home, I rang the bell, that tea was served, and said:

- As far as I can judge, Holmes, if your theory is correct, Mr. Sharpe has committed the perfect murder!

Holmes leaned back in his favorite chair and began to fill his pipe tobacco.

- The point is, of course, confused - he admitted - but perhaps the key to the mystery is found.

We sat in silence for an hour, and Holmes was thinking, not paying any attention to tea, while I am pleased to reinforce a cup of strong tea after a day's work. After an hour, my friend said:

- So, Watson, I see three ways in which it could make. Tomorrow we will be able to check at least one of them, if you agree to ride again in Highgate.

I expect that we will go there early in the morning, but was disappointed.

- No, Watson, now we wait for this and we'll go after lunch, - said my friend. - Some research is best done not in the bright light of day. Fortunately, at this time, the early dusk.

The next day we returned to the hired carriage in the South Grove. Holmes pointed to one building:

- Highgate Literary and Scientific Society, - he said. - Worthy organization. Last year I had the honor to read here a lecture about his methods, and I'm sure they'll let me take advantage of the library.

In fact, we met the Secretary is so eager to be of service to Sherlock Holmes, even felt awkward.

- Of course, Mr. Holmes, all that has our society, always to the services of a man like you! - He exclaimed. - Here please.

The secretary took us to the library, located at the rear of the building. It was very spacious, although there is almost exclusively kept materials about local history, which is limited to the interests of society.

- Can I ask you whether you are currently working on some business?

- Work, sir, - said Holmes. - However, while I'm not at liberty to speak freely about it. And now I would like to take a look at the obituaries.

- Oh my God! - Cried the secretary. - So, we are talking about murder? - Apparently, this idea led him to great excitement.

- Perhaps - Holmes muttered. - At the moment I'm just doing a little research.

- Of course, of course, I understand. Come here - here we have collected all the old issue of "The Times", up to the latest release.

He led us to the bookcase, where rows of beautifully interwoven rooms were. Holmes chose the latter, and that began to look for the right page. The secretary hovered near us, hoping something else to find out. Not showing the desire to retire, my friend held his conversation.

- I do not think many readers have expressed a desire to see the pages obituaries, - he said, turning the page.

- Actually, Mr. Holmes, they are not so little. Many members of our society - zealous historians, and they are now and then have to specify the date of birth, wedding and death. For the middle and upper classes "Times" is much easier to record in the parish register.

- Clearly, - Holmes nodded. - So, not more recent numbers are especially in demand.

- They are not often used, it is true - the secretary acknowledged. - However, at least one of our visitors, loan shark, comes regularly to read the "Times" and view the obituaries. If he says the name of the deceased, who lived in our district and which may prove to be rarities, then visited by relatives, to make an offer. Yes, he knows his stuff.

- Really, - Holmes agreed with a careless nod.

This news shocked me, but I tried to keep a straight face. We are very close to getting to the Sharpe!

Finally, the Secretary left us. Holmes glanced over his shoulder, I saw that it scans the obituaries for the month, when she died, Mrs. Sharpe. I still remained in the dark about the purpose which it pursues in its quest.

- Holmes - I whispered quietly, so we could not eavesdrop on - but we also know the date of the death of Mrs Sharp, and, in any case, the announcement of the death of his wife shopkeeper hardly would appear in the "Times."

- That's right, Watson. In a sense, I'm looking for someone like her. - And he continued his search. - Yeah, there is something for us! - He exclaimed.

I looked back over his shoulder. It was a traditional obituary of a local resident. Lady Jane Lee, a niece of Count Lauderdale, town house which stands on Highgate Hill, died at the age of forty-two years. The cause of death was not mentioned.

- How did this lady may be associated with our business? - I wondered, studying the obituary. - She died a few days earlier than Mrs. Sharpe.

- Maybe it is not related, but I think there is a chance. Watson, we go back to the cemetery: it is necessary to visit the deceased!

At Highgate cemetery, we were already in the twilight. However, to find a great family vault Lauderdale was not difficult - he was at the entrance. Access to the tomb with the Gothic gabled roof and Greek columns blocked by bronze door, green with damp. Holmes intently examined the lock through a magnifying glass. Finally he stood up, expressing satisfaction.

- Scratches around the castle, my dear Watson. That is what I expected to see.

- Vault defiled!

- Absolutely. The body of Lady Jane withdrawn and replaced by the body of Mrs. Sharpe. They were about the same age, so it required a doctor, who knew Mrs. Sharpe, to examine the corpse. Her family lives in Derbyshire, and relatives could not see the body. Artfully conceived, Watson.

- And what about this, Mrs. Sharpe?

- I am of the opinion that we will find her in the coffin of Lady Jane. A corpse can not be long hidden, as if Sharpe tried to bury it in your back garden, the neighbors would certainly have noticed. The empty tomb - that's the best place to hide a corpse.

It was not a crime of passion, committed under the influence of minute rash - Sharp coolly plotted the murder of his wife. He waited until the doctor, to use Mrs. Sharpe, leave to rest, and began to look for a woman about the same age with her, died of some natural cause. He was sure that in such a densely populated area suitable case turned up soon. Before turning to Dr. Fletcher, he waited a few days, it was more difficult to establish the time of death, and referred to the fact that he was allegedly out.

When we left the cemetery, I felt that someone was standing under a willow close, but before I could pull Holmes by the arm to get his attention to this obscure figure as there was nobody. Perhaps I misled shadow, or something was a man who came to the grave of the deceased dear.

Double turning to the right, we passed through the narrow gate into the adjacent Uoterlou Park. In the distance loomed the Catholic church, built in recent years.

In the vast park where now there was not a soul, Holmes carefully inspected the fence separating the park from the cemetery. Finally, he issued a cry of satisfaction:

- Wow! Careful, Watson, not too close: you destroy evidence.

Where he pointed out, I saw the two parallel furrows in the dirt.

- Hand trolley! - I cried.

- Absolutely. And notice the traces are very deep. On the trolley to transport something heavy. This suggests that he really hid his wife's body in the tomb.

We got into the dense thicket, hiding part of the fence. Then we look for footprints, and Holmes motioned me to step aside so that he could inspect them.

- Yes, everything is clear. Trolley stayed here for some time. And footprints are much deeper when he shoulder the brunt. Not an easy task for a man of such addition.

I am a doctor, a seasoned horrors of war, shuddered at the thought of that dreadful journey. So he takes out his wife's body trucks, which killed and heaped on his shoulders, then barely dotaskivaet to the crypt and fumbling in the dark, one replacing another corpse.

Pulling from his pocket roulette Holmes measured the distance between the wheels of the cart, then took footprints and record the results in a notebook. Then he straightened up.

- Another step, Watson, before we officially authorities shall present evidence against Mr. Sharpe. It is necessary to examine it handcart, which, if not mistaken Miss Franklin is in stable blacksmith. It necessarily show up traces of blood, and perhaps threads from clothing.

We have again started to rise in the steep mountain. Cope from some boy, we learned where the stables.

At that moment I had an idea:

- Holmes, I'm sorry, but I have to leave you for a few minutes: you have to break the news to Miss Franklin, to comfort her. Of course, no details - just put on notice that we have found the circumstances due to which the marriage with her is impossible for Mr. Sharpe.

Holmes smiled indulgently:

- Well, of course, comfort the lady - it is on your part, Watson. Do as you please. If you deign to meet me at Townsend-yard half an hour, then we'll hire a cab and go to Baker Street.

I turned and walked briskly to the West Hill. When I walked past the building Literary and Scientific Society, then accidentally met with the secretary, who was just coming out of it.

- Dr. Watson! - He exclaimed heartily. - I hope your research bear fruit?

- Yes, - I replied. - It only remains to add the last link.

- Glad to hear it. Your visit has already made a lot of noise. Several members of our society have tried to extract information from me, which, alas, are negligible. In particular, the gentleman I mentioned, just gone, as usual, read the obituaries, after a closed shop. He saw that the old volume is not there, and consulted about the reason. When I replied that I was interested in their well-known Mr. Sherlock Holmes, he was amazed and asked where you're headed. I was only able to say that you went to the cemetery to continue his investigation.

Hearing this, I shuddered. Of course, for us to follow! What a fool I am, I did not notice it!

Impolite interrupting the conversation with the secretary, I rushed in the direction in which Holmes went. In desperation, I asked a passerby where Townsend Yard, and I heard that you need a little bit down the slope of Highgate Hill. Turning the corner, I saw the open door of the stables. Behind the door was a Sharp - fortunately, his back to me. In his hand he had a gun last century may duel from his shop. He peered through the crack between the door and the jamb.

I cursed myself for having left his army revolver at home, arguing that he did not need. However, I took a strong stick to make it easier to climb the steep slopes of Highgate Hill. I moved forward, quickly and quietly.

At this time the villain aim of his gun, ready to shoot the gap. I shouted, and he turned, not knowing to whom to blurt out before. Taking advantage of the confusion Sharpe, I hit him with a stick on the wrist. There was a loud crackling, and he dropped his gun, howl in pain.

Rushing to Sharpe, I grabbed him, but he broke free and ran out of the yard, ran down the slope. Holmes jumped out of the stables, and he took one look to assess the situation.

- For him, Watson! He must not escape! - Cried my friend.

We raced with all legs, chasing the villain. Highgate Hill - the steepest in London, and the descent was difficult. Sharpe conceded agility Holmes, who, thanks to a long and sinewy legs to addition could give him a hundred points. However, the moneylender had an advantage: he knew the terrain. Wagging from side to side, and then crossing the tram line, which ran in the middle of the street, jumping over the fence, he was a little ahead of Holmes. I am also the fault of a sedentary lifestyle trailed behind. Going down to the middle of the hill, we found ourselves in front of the Catholic Church. Realizing that he would lose on the straight line distance, Sharpe turned to the left. Follow him, we soon realized his plan: he was going to the arch, over the Great Northern vysivsheysya road connecting London to Edinburgh.

While times have begun to demolish the old viaduct of brick and stone to make room for the triumph of modern engineering known to us today. So far, engineers have erected seven huge iron beams directly above the old structure. Sharpe climbed to the old arch way between piles of debris. I'm afraid that in this darkness he has a real chance to escape or confuse the marks, because here is where to hide.

- Follow him, Watson! - Cried my friend, and he turned and ran to the new bridge.

My soul went into the heel, when he was rushed to the nearest huge beam of iron. She was more than a foot wide, and if it was not so high above the ground, this company would not be dangerous. But truly needed nerves of steel to not be afraid to fall on a large highway stretches beneath us.

I realized that Holmes is going to cut off escape routes to Sharpe, and followed the villain, pounding it on wobbly remnants of the old buildings. He frantically clung to the stonework with natural agility, increasing the distance between us. Then, glancing ahead, he saw Holmes, who moved to meet him on the other side. Sharpe stopped, looking around in desperation. We Holmes approached, confident that now he is not going anywhere. But we were wrong: Sharpe was one way out, and he took it. With a wild cry, he jumped over the parapet of the wreckage and rushed down the highway, to which was fifty feet.

Bottom shouts. Having caught up with me, Holmes pulled my sleeve. - Come, Watson, then we have nothing more to do. At least, Sharpe escaped the gallows, which he would not otherwise be avoided.

Now it was only to inform the authorities. Holmes informed the Scotland Yard, and told the police his suspicions, and soon a local judge authorized the police to visit the family tomb Lauderdale.

A few days later, at Highgate Cemetery has a grim company to their family vault: cemetery watchman; Inspector Lestrade with one of his constables; Dr. Smith, the doctor Mrs Sharpe; very elegant gentleman Gallien names, representing the interests Lauderdale family and we Holmes.

The guard pulled out his key, and we all went in, taking off his hat. The crypt was unsuitable crowded when we gathered around the coffin. Burly constable took out a screwdriver and began to tinker with numerous bars. Finally with the help of the guard cap beautiful coffin was lifted, which still looked very new, and it set aside. In the coffin, silk upholstery, spattered with blood, lay mutilated corpse of a middle-aged woman. Next to it, we saw a long shiny object from the tree. Holmes stretched out his hand and took it with satisfied air.

- Fighting with a heavy stick knob! - He exclaimed. - The last missing link in the chain of evidence.

Dr. Smith said in an official tone:

- Inspector, I can testify that the person - my former patient, Mrs. Dorothy Sharpe of Highgate West Hill.

Lestrade nodded to the constable, and he took out a pad and pencil, wrote down these words.

- Thank you, Doctor, - said Lestrade, for those turned to the guard: - We also received an order to exhume the body, buried in the grave of Mrs. Sharpe, I'll show you at the station. I would ask you to call a couple of gravediggers to dig up the coffin and placed it open in the church, until we find someone to identify the body. Undoubtedly, Mr. Holmes rights and we find that it is Lady Jane. In this case, we turn to the coroner to resume the two inquiries.

- Resume inquiry! - I exclaimed in horror, Mr. Gallien. - Gentlemen, I must insist that you refrain from hasty steps. All this would be very unpleasant for his lordship. With the body of his cousin were treated improperly. This is a serious test for his refined senses. I must ask that the matter was kept in secrecy. - He barely managed to pull myself together. - Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sir Spencer Walpole, or senior officer of his staff will contact you, Inspector, early tomorrow morning to discuss how to handle this matter. Be so kind as to do nothing, as long as you do not will talk. Mr. Holmes, I guess I have to give credit to your insight, but, honestly, it is better to leave things as they are. I have no doubt that his

lordship wish to generously reward your efforts. However, it is important that the slightest rumor about this scandalous incident is not leaked to the press.

Holmes weighed him a grim nod:

- Sir, I live for my work. I do not need fame, which I bought thanks to Watson, and with his hand, I willingly join in the request. Perhaps, for you great luck, Sharpe is dead, because no one person can not be denied the right to a fair trial.

Lestrade clearly did not like such interference, but Gallien insisted, and I have not seen mention of this story in the newspapers. Without a doubt, an inquiry was carried out, but in the office of a judge, not a public hearing, and the documents went to the secret shelves of State Archives at Kew. Thus, I leave to future times the story of this most sinister of all crimes, Holmes unraveled.

Case of the Missing rubies

One morning at the end of 1893, we were sitting at the breakfast table with Holmes. That winter was unusually cold. It could be seen from the living room window as the snow had fallen over night turns into black slush underfoot walkers and wheel carriages. The sky is overcast with clouds, the air was cold and damp, and all this made depressing impression on me. Mrs. Hudson has brought the mail, and we both could not deny myself the pleasure to check out for a meal.

- Here interesting letter, Watson, - said my friend. - From one of my Yorkshire cousins. Me and my brother Mycroft are invited to spend Christmas in the West Riding. It can be seen, cousin and his wife took pity on two old bachelors.

- And you accept the invitation?

- Honestly, I think that will certainly take! With all my love to London, it is not too good at this time of year. Short vacation in the country will be useful to me, and I will be back in the New Year refreshed.

Of course, I tried to hide my feelings, but I was hard on the heart. In the absence of friends, which I could impose at holiday time, in the absence of Holmes I perforce compelled I will celebrate Christmas alone.

- I hope you come with me, Watson? - Holmes asked.

- I? But I'm not a member of your family, Holmes. I can not ask for your relatives.

- Nonsense! At home in Yorkshire they see so few new faces that are always very welcome guests. They will sit for hours spellbound, listening to your stories about life in the capital. Of course, there is a place for you. They have a big house and servants except only their little son lives with them.

- Well, it is delightful to spend Christmas in the country. Perhaps, if you're so delicately touched on this issue, so they had a chance to refuse, I would agree.

- I'll send them a telegram when we finish breakfast. Unfortunately, the telegram leaves little room for subtlety and delicacy, but I'll do what I can!

And so it happened that a few days before Christmas we Holmes took the train to St Pancras. Traveling with amenities, a few hours later we arrived at the village on a picturesque hill Klapem Yorkshire Dales.

Before a small station we already expected gig. The driver, red-faced and cheerful, who identified himself as Posletueytom, whipped his horse, and we set off trot. In these northern regions were, of course, is much colder than in London, and all around covered with a thick shroud of snow. I am happy to look around the neighborhood. On the hillside stretched the field, enclosed by walls of stones stacked without mortar; behind them rose the steep cliffs; in some places you could see a group of trees. This picture has contributed to the pacification of the soul of someone who spends too much time in the maze of endless streets of our great capital.

An hour later, the road abruptly went up the hill. Above us loomed a mountain on one side of a steep, on the other hand more gently toward the west. Its dark mass resembled a large beast that sprawled and dozing sensitively.

- What is this mountain Posletueyt? - I asked.

- Penigent, sir, one of the Three Peaks. You can see it from the window of a house: there it can be clearly seen.

Soon we turned off the road and, after passing between two stone pillars gate, drove up the drive to the house - a large country house, built fifty years ago, one of the great barons, nazhivshih fortune on wool. It was built, as well as the most modest local homes, made of limestone, which has for the most part dark yellow color.

The family came to meet us. Cousin John Holmes Parsons, a tall man of strong constitution, long shook his hand.

- Welcome to Yorkshire, Dr. Watson! - He said to me very friendly, exchanging a handshake with me.

Then I was introduced to his wife, a charming young woman, and was introduced to their son Christopher, Kripen'ka baby three years. Despite such a young age, he does not cling to the mother skirt and boldly walked up to us and gravely allowed to shake his hand.

Having servant our coats and canes, Holmes and I, along with all held in a spacious living room to drink a cup of coffee is very coveted. There we were introduced to Roderick Keeley, brother of Mrs. Parsons, who also came for Christmas. He got up, muttering words suitable to the occasion. I noticed that my brother is not like my sister: he is - dark and gloomy, she - blonde with a cheerful disposition.

- There is news from Mycroft? - Asked Holmes.

- We received a telegram from him this morning, - said John. - He hopes to come to us tomorrow before lunch.

- Excellent! He will be able to go for a walk with us tomorrow afternoon.

These words caused a rapid explosion of the fun: Mycroft was famous for his laziness and obesity.

We were led into the next room, from which windows, as told Posletueyt, offering superb views of Mount Penigent. I'm looking forward to an invigorating walk through the snow-covered paths - it does not matter whether or not accompanied by Mycroft me.

Lunch is served in the evening was a simple rural meal, but tasty and plentiful. Christopher indulgent parents allowed to sit at the table with us, and he was sitting on a high chair next to her mother. With us also dined his nanny, Miss Beck, a very pretty girl of about twenty. She was originally from Ilkley, but her voice barely noticed the local accent. I must admit that her regular features and a beautiful complexion made a favorable impression on me.

Mrs. Parsons went out to dinner in a long dress coffee color, trimmed with lace and a beautiful necklace. They were rubies, but polished like emeralds - oblong, with chamfered corners, light, graceful gold. A very elegant decoration. I did compliment the hostess about her necklaces.

- You are too kind, Dr. Watson, - she said. - It may seem that it is too luxurious for a family dinner, but here we have so little chance to showcase their jewels. Sometimes we go to the balls in Leeds and Lancaster, but they are so far away that we rarely get out there. I therefore take this opportunity, when we have guests.

- Entertainment, of course, important for a young lady like you, but as for me, I would gladly settled in your region. I'm here so comfortable and relaxed that I was horrified to think about returning to the crowded London with its vanity. I'd got himself a practice here, but all the local residents of a flourishing health, I would have died of hunger!

Everyone laughed, and Holmes said:

- Well, at the very least there is always a decent Posletueyt. He still sore elbow since it several years ago, fell from his steed.

Mrs. Parsons looked at him in surprise:

- He has already told you about his service in the cavalry? you must have made a great impression on him - he's taciturn, like any good Yorkshireman.

- He did not tell me anything, but I immediately saw in his bearing, it is an old soldier. And from the way he ruled the horse on the way here, I concluded that he feeds her tender, and that a long time ago he broke his left elbow. The turning point of the elbow - a common occurrence in the fall from a horse.

- It's amazing! You are quite right: he served in the Fifth Lancers in India at the beginning of my father, Colonel Kiley. When he had to leave the army because of this unfortunate fracture, his father took him to his house, and from there moved on to Posletueyt us.

- Your father showed very commendable concern for his soldiers, - I said.

Mrs. Parsons sighed:

- Yes indeed. However, so many people in need of help! I'm afraid that in these places alone, there are many of those who received terrible wounds in the service of his queen and the country. Since they are no longer able to earn a living, is constantly starving and eventually early death from disease and deprivation.

John Parsons words of his wife caused mild irritation.

- You have already mentioned it many times, dear, - he said - and I have always expressed the opinion that most of these people - loafers and cheats that are perfectly able to work if they wanted to. But why? They also always give money, those who have feelings often prevail over reason.

Mrs. Parsons frowned:

- You're being unfair, John. War, in which we are constantly engaged, bringing enlightenment and the true religion to those who in this world less fortunate, make the crippled awful lot of our young people. It is our duty - to take care of them. Well, if he a cousin of the Queen, the Marquis of Granby, is setting an example, how can we follow his example?

- Here's another one of those who is always ready to listen to the sob story. I'm sure if he will continue to give away his fortune, every pub in England would be called by his name!

It was clear that matures family quarrel, so I hastened to change the subject:

- I was hoping you shoot. Here is a good hunting?

- Yes, - said John Parsons. - On the heath full of grouse and hares, as well as the few trees there, it is possible to beat the game without interference from a distance. Here is a wonderful shooter Roderick. Maybe you take Dr. Watson himself, Roderick, the next time you go hunting?

- Of course, - indifferently replied Roderick, not taking his eyes from his plate.

- And you have to take one of my guns - John continued, ignoring the bad behavior of his brother. - I hope you will choose something suitable in the armory. Tomorrow I'll take you there.

The next morning the sky nalilos lead, threatening to snow. Posletueyt early Klapem went to meet Mycroft. Soon after he went on a journey, we began to fall the first snowflakes - at first slowly, then faster and faster. Finally the snow tumbled down with such force that we are worried, do not delay Does this train arrival.

I have an hour or two revered novel, but it seemed to me boring and I decided to look for someone's company. Peering into the classroom, I saw Miss Beck from her ward. Boy playing with a big toy fort.

- Bang Bang! - He cried when I entered. I smiled at the kid.

- I'm a friend, - I protested, - a real British soldiers, as well as you.

Christopher looked at me doubtfully:

- Where's your red coat, if you are a soldier? All soldiers wear red uniforms. I want a uniform.

- I have a uniform at home, - I said - but, in fact, I retired from the army. You see, I was wounded.

Hearing this, Christopher beamed:

- You got shot?

- Yes. He was wounded in the shoulder. It was very painful.

Miss Beck looked at me with sympathy:

- I'm so sorry, Dr. Watson. I hope you are now completely recovered?

- In wet weather has aches a bit, but that's okay. Many of my friends did not return from Afghanistan, so I think I was lucky. And now, young man, let's see, how are you getting on with the strategy.

I leaned over the fort, made of wooden planks. Windows jigsaw cut through the front gate were the current lock, through which it was possible to enter the fort; present and ramparts. Tin soldiers arranged in various poses: some patrolling, others threatened someone weapons.

- You know who they are? - I asked, pointing to the soldiers with blue shakos and belts.

- It engineers. They dig trenches and all.

Miss Beck laughed:

- He knows all about the regiment forms. Posletueyt often plays with him and taught everything that is connected with the army. It was he who fashioned fort.

- Excellent! Well, your people are well placed. They protect you from both sides of the gate - it is always a weak point. And the soldiers are in the corners - it's also good: they can keep under fire the two sides of the fort at the same time. You make just one mistake, general: there are no people at the windows. They are needed in the event that will be selected if the enemy is too close to the walls and the escapes - then it's not reach the walls.

Christopher frowned:

- I have enough soldiers. I can only put them on the walls.

- Nearing Christmas, my dear, - slyly said Miss Beck. - It may be that the new systems will come the soldiers to go to your order.

These words are not entirely convinced the boy, but he was a little more cheerful, and no longer paying attention to us, he continued his battle. We Miss Beck, sitting at the window, tied a pleasant conversation.

The windows of the classroom out in the front of the house, and suddenly I was relieved to see a return gig. Posletueyt sat on the box, but I would not have recognized him, he was covered with snow, and his head sunk in a scarf.

We Miss Beck rushed to the door and managed to greet Mycroft when his fat figure quickly tumbled into the house. I noticed that the boots had soaked pants and even push-ups below the knee. Posletueyt Mycroft followed on the heels of his bags and, carelessly knocking them into the corner, I went to put the horse in the stable. All we sighed with relief when the door closed behind which were the wind and snowstorm.

- Ha-ha! - Exclaimed Mycroft. - How nice to be back in the house! However, I am afraid, us Londoners, not soon be able to return to his usual abode.

- You want to say that we have brought? - Asked John Parsons.

- Without any doubt. I had to get out of the carriage and trudge on this damn mountain, otherwise I would have been there now!

- There is no reason for concern - intervened Mrs. Parsons. - We come cut off approximately every three years, so it is already used to, and we are always ready large stocks of food and fuel. The only danger - it's boring, but in such a company, it does not threaten us!

Mycroft immediately carried out to change into room assigned to him, and soon he joined us. Now he was sitting in the living room in front of a blazing fire in the fireplace. It was still the middle of the day, but because of bad weather had to light the lamps. The maid brought tea, and we sat down at the table. Mycroft umyav huge amount of cakes and pastries, entertained us with funny stories. This frequenter of the club, apparently was familiar with many famous people also knew anecdotes about each.

- Last week, in the evening - his booming voice thundered, - Prime Minister dined at the club with a good appetite. Later he told me he did not have breakfast, as he conferred with his secretary, who expounded to him the news about the situation in Crimea. Lunch he missed because suddenly the queen summoned him, and wanting to hear what's new. Participation in the debate about the Crimea deprived of his five-hour tea. Finally he arrived at the club and ordered his favorite meal: lamb chops served with boiled potatoes and green beans. But at the very moment when the waiter put it all in front of him, a messenger arrived from his wife, recalling that they should be at a reception at the French ambassador, as prime completely forgotten. Grabbing a knife and fork, he began with great haste to send in your mouth huge chunks of meat and whole potatoes. It took him less than two minutes to ensure that devastate the whole plate. Then he got up and ran out of the dining room!

We vigorously fun imagining how immaculate Mr. Gladstone, whose moderation in eating and drinking fine manners set an example for all children in the country, absorbing his lunch in a similar way.

After spending some more time for a pleasant conversation, we went in all directions. I went to the library to parse business papers and write some letters. Ironically, it is now that I have turned out to have leisure time to catch up in the mail, I was not able to send emails.

At seven o'clock I collected all the papers and went to her room to change for dinner. When I reached the hall, I heard a loud shout from the top. I heard rapid footsteps and saw Mrs. Parsons, leaning over the railing on the second floor.

- Dr. Watson, please, find my husband and tell him to go without delay to our room. Terrible happened!

I immediately ran to the office, where he found John Parsons and Sherlock Holmes for conversation, and gave a message. The three of us hurried upstairs. Mrs. Parsons was one of his elegant dresses, but the view was killed. In the corner of her maid in tears Brook.

- My rubies, John! They disappeared! - Exclaimed the hostess, turning to her husband.

His face immediately darkened.

- And when did you see them last? - he asked.

- I put them in her jewelry box last night, as always. During the day, I have not had occasion to look into the box, and now I opened it to get a necklace - but it's not there! I immediately called Brook, believing that she could take it to be cleaned. But she did not take.

Sherlock Holmes asked:

- Does anyone have access to your room, but you, your husband and the maid?

- No one. Brooke clean up when necessary, and melts the fireplace brings me morning tea.

- In this case, we must assume that the stolen rubies.

- It's impossible - heatedly objected John Parsons. - My servant is suspected: the majority is with us from my very childhood. As for the guests, all of them - except you, doctor - my close relatives.

- Of course, all this is unpleasant, but I ask you not to despair: at least rubies will not leave the house until it is covered with snow. And during this time I hope to find the person who stole them.

In the evening a dinner was held in an atmosphere of gloom. Mrs. Parsons was in despair, and ate little and talked less. Mr. Parsons was in a rage and sat dark clouds, not talking to anyone. In such circumstances, the rest started talking only when necessary.

After lunch, Sherlock Holmes went into the room of Mrs. Parsons with his magnifying glass. About an hour later, he joined us Mycroft in the library to discuss what he has learned.

- The room is nothing much - except that it is inhabited. I think the thief simply seized an opportune moment, and entered. Since the first room on the account of the landing, we all go past her, heading to her bedroom. I am sure you have noticed that the door of the room is often left open. Dressing table - against the far wall. The offender could in three steps to walk, steal and escape rubies, and none of this would take a lot of time.

Make inquiries, I learned that the servants bedrooms are at the back of the house and it is a separate staircase. None of these, except Brook, usually is lying along the main ladder. The exception is Miss Beck, whose facilities are located next to the nursery.

Mycroft chuckled:

- So, the ability to have Brooke, Miss Beck, Roderick Keely, we are with you - and, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Parsons.

- Would hardly they began to steal from ourselves! - I laughed.

Sherlock raised an eyebrow, and Mycroft snorted.

- On the contrary, my dear Watson, - said my friend - Mrs Parsons - the main suspect. After all, she, good soul, would like to help those who, as we know it, suffers no fault of their own. But her husband in addition to his other virtues, has a typical Yorkshire thrift and skepticism. he did not give her why. Is it not possible that she hid rubies and as soon as possible to sell them to consume the money for the work which considers worthy?

- Well, it's possible. But you yourself have seen how upset she was at dinner only two hours ago!

- My gallant Watson! Nothing awakens in you a noble knight, a woman's tears! Well, set aside until Mrs. Parsons and consider other candidates.

- This, of course, Roderick Keeley.

- Undoubtedly, he was under suspicion. Roderick - the youngest of the three sons of Colonel Kiley, and so it has few prospects. He could convince himself that the sisters duty - to help him when he feels the need for cash, and if he take care of itself, it saves her from a painful explanation with her husband.

- Of course, he is guilty, - I said. - Brooke for many years is the maid of Mrs. Parsons and Miss Beck, of course, no criminal tendencies.

Holmes smiled: - Brooke, I can skip, which is not the Miss Beck. It's definitely not from an ordinary family: it shows in her speech and manners. Nevertheless, it takes a modest, albeit respectable position of nanny. We can conclude that either she quarreled with her family or her family fell on hard times and is forced to take on the work that turned up.

Perhaps the young woman was holding a grudge and, considering it unfair that its owner is given so much, and she was - so little, decided to restore justice.

- I can not believe this! Holmes shrugged his shoulders:

- This is a possibility - but that I do stop. It is possible to construct a set of hypotheses, but no evidence is unclear which of them is correct.

- Here's the catch - Mycroft chuckled. - Data. We only know that rubies were kidnapped. And now we have to watch the others. We can not allow them to leave the house. These damn heath there are a thousand places to hide the necklace, and then pick it up a few months later, when the noise subsided.

- But we can hardly keep the inhabitants of the house locked up against their will, - I replied.

- Just a few days - Mycroft said, - and in that time I and my younger brother, no doubt, to unravel the mystery.

- Perhaps, to keep them in the house is not so difficult. Now that the snow piled outside the knee, and in snowdrifts can fail with the head, it will take a very strong excuse for a stroll.

The next day it turned out that I was wrong. An hour after breakfast, I noticed that Roderick, wearing a warm jacket with a gun and game-bag in hand, toward the door.

- Hi! - Hurriedly I said to him. - Where are you?

- And what do you think? - He replied coldly. It is true that my tone was unintentionally sharp. - I'm going to hunt a bit. I'll be back before tea.

- Oh, I'd like to go with you - I said immediately.

- Another time somewhere in the future somehow another time sometime later.

Fortunately, at this moment in time there was a very John Parsons, who took my side.

- How so, Roderick? - He intervened. - After all, you promised to take the day before Dr. Watson with a hunting and show the place. Please wait a few minutes until we equipping.

- Well, - reluctantly agreed to Roderick. He clearly did not relish taking me with him, but also no longer wanted to insult his son-rich. I decided to be impartial: perhaps he simply prefers to hunt alone. Nevertheless I swore to vigilantly monitor it.

John Parsons led me to the armory. It was small, but well-equipped: there had even a table on which I saw the tools and the different liquids to clean weapons. It contained several rifles "Lee Enfield". On the wall hung a huge gun for hunting elephants. In the window were pistols, including two pairs of old dueling. But mainly consisted of a collection of shotguns - they were here at least twenty.

I praised the weapons assembly and John said:

- Usually in August, here I invite friends to shoot grouse on the heath. There is nothing better than a good hunting, good friends and a good walk in the fresh air.

- You are very hospitable.

- I'm doing it for my own pleasure. And now let's see. That this "Purdy" seems to suit you. Do you want to try it?

He removed from the rack, this fine example of the art weapons. The stock was made of mahogany, wonderful chasing on metal showed a hunting scene: a duck flew up from the reeds, and a pair of dogs to cast the votes. The hammer is designed as reeds beam. The picture does not look all opened at once, and in part, when the gun rotated.

I pressed it to his shoulder and took aim. It was perfectly balanced. - Excellent weapon, I must say! - I said. - Perhaps I never held in the hands of the best.

- I'm afraid that the shotgun could never be with you a single entity, if not made to order. Nevertheless you have a great shoot. Now let me give you ammunition. These, with a small fraction of the fifteenth rooms, suitable for partridge, the twentieth room is suitable for rabbits and hares. If you charge the muzzle of different cartridges, you'll be ready to whoever caught.

I effusive in his thanks, but he just shrugged and went out with me out of the room, carefully closed the door.

- I wish you a successful hunt, the doctor. I regret only that I can not go with you, but at the end of the year the estate business consuming so much time. I hope today for tea, you entertain us with tales of hunting.

Goodbye to him, I went to my room to get dressed for a walk. I was in a hurry as he could, but when I came down, I noticed that clearly irritated Roderick delay.

- Come on - he grunted and, without saying another word, went first into the snow.

We went around the house and began to climb the steep slope. It was not easy, especially because we did not want to put a gun in the snow. Fortunately, many of the limestone blocks of sod, and using them as a support for the hands and feet, we progressed quite cheerfully. After half an hour of exhausting ascent we were on the hilly horizontal space. It formed a sort of wide step on the approaches to the mountain Penigent, which now towered above us.

- What's the name of this place? - I asked.

- Bli-Fell, - said my companion, - but we will go on to Newby Moss over there: they prey more common.

Walking has become easier, but the distance was almost two miles. I tried to strike up a conversation on the move:

- Do you often shoot given case?

- Less than desirable.

- Of course, good to have a sister who has a big house in the Dales.

- My sister is not anything like it - it's my son-in a big house in the Dales.

- Well, of course, is what I wanted to say.

Roderick only grunted in response, and I paused, keeping the strength to walk.

We walked a few yards, when suddenly right at us from under the feet sprang a hare. He raced on to a pile of boulders curve, working furiously clutching paws and ears. We both raised their rifles to shoulder, but Roderick did it quickly and shot. Our shots are merged into one. The hare jumped somersault in the air and fell dead. With a satisfied chuckle Roderick went over to him and picked up the carcass, put in your game bag.

- Which one of us shot him? - I asked.

- I.

Soon we arrived at Newby Moss. This flat plain was divided into fields with walls already familiar to me, folded without mortar. We got through the first, and Roderick suggested:

- Let us stand in line. So do better: we will have twice as much game, and if you're lucky, the two of us all her shoot.

I strongly suspect that he just did not want to talk with me, but agreed, as is still able to observe his movements. We went about forty feet and slowly moved across the field. By the time we reached the far borders, we still did not meet. We both started to climb over the wall. It was not easy, because we reached the wall to the chest and the upper stones rocked. Finally I climbed up on the wall and she was going to jump on the turf, when he heard a very loud bang and I was thrown back onto the field.

I lay there, not knowing anything, and suddenly felt a pain in his left hand. Hearing Roderick running toward me, I was scared for my life: what if he's going to kill me? I looked on the earth his shotgun, but he flew too far. Seeing blood on the snow, I turned to be on the safe side face to Roderick. However, he flung his gun and leaned over me with obvious concern.

- Are you okay? Where do you got?

- In the hand. - I tried to pick it up, but then he gave up the attempt.

Pulling a knife from his game bag, Roderick cut my sleeve. Turning it, he examined the wound.

- I think that's okay. However, a lot of blood and wounds, but they are small and do not have a serious injury. You will be able to walk or run to me for help?

- Help me to sit down.

He lifted me, and I sat for a bit, coming to himself. Finally with the help of Roderick I got to his feet.

- I think I can go.

- Well done. Place your right hand on my shoulder, and forward.

We went at a slow pace, and Roderick twice had to leave me to make a hole in the wall. However, our path lay mostly downhill, to the wounded arm became numb and the pain dulled.

Finally appeared the house. Roderick yelled and Posletueyt together with one of the grooms came to help us. I have in the living room and gently put on the couch.

- Watson! What happened to you? - Sherlock Holmes said, coming up to me.

- I was wounded in the arm. Nothing serious, there is no reason for concern.

- Thank God, if so, - said my friend threw a murderous look at Roderick - because there is no possibility to invite the doctors and we have to treat you yourselves. So what is it that happened?

- It's my fault, - explained Roderick. - When I climbed the wall, trigger gun hook caught on the button of my jacket. Damn stupid of me I was to leave the hammer cocked, but we came across as a little game that I did not want to miss the chance.

Miss Beck hurried gait walked into the room.

- My poor Dr. Watson! How can I help you? I took care of my dear father in his last years, so I have experience of nurses.

- Of course, you can help, if you are not afraid of the sight of blood, - I said, gratefully at her. - If you have brought a basin of hot water, tweezers, towels and bandages, I would instruct you what to do next.

- I'll get it all at once.

And she hurried away. Holmes spoke with me in general terms about the heath, but he clearly prevented the presence of Roderick. Upon returning Miss Beck, my friend said:

- We'll leave you with your patient, but will close. Please call us if there's any need to be.

Both of them left. Miss Beck put a basin on a mat and knelt beside the couch. After cutting with scissors sleeve jacket and shirt at the elbow, she carefully wiped the blood. I examined the wound. On hand was visible wide ribbon of small wounds - fortunately, not

on the side where the artery passes. I sighed, things could be much worse. However, I believe that it is enough to serve in Afghanistan target and I've had enough.

Without further tips Miss Beck got down to business. Some wounds were superficial, others - damn deep. I gnashed his teeth, trying not to moan. As for the lady, she peered anxiously into my face, when she had to remove the deeply entrenched pellets, and have cried quietly after a few minutes. Following my instructions, she rolled up bandage, tightly wrapped and tied my hand, making a knot and cut off the ends.

- Well, I have done.

Unexpectedly I stretched his good hand and hugged Miss Beck. Under the influence of impulse she moved toward me, and we had a long and passionate kiss. Its strong young body pressed against mine, and we forgot about everything.

Soon, however, she came to her senses and gently pulled away from my arms. Rising to her feet, she smiled at me and purely feminine gesture mechanically smoothed her hair.

- And you must take liberties with his nurses, Dr. Watson, - she said cheerfully. - I'm sure they are competing for the right to work with you, just get a fee.

For my part, I did not see anything funny happened. I was weak and trembling Scold me because of the injury, difficult walking on the moors, and a flurry of emotions that raged in me.

- My dear Miss Beck - haltingly uttered I - I bring apologies for his behavior. I have no excuse for the fact that I took advantage of your youth and inexperience.

In response, she raised an eyebrow: - If there is someone's fault, doctor, I do not blame you less. If you want, I will erase the memory of this episode?

- I'm not asking you to do it.

- And now I leave you to rest. Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Mr. Mycroft, of course, can not wait to see you. Ask them to wait - say, an hour?

- Thank you. I am sure that by the time I will be much better.

Ms. Beck has collected all that has brought, and left the room. I lay on the couch, overwhelmed with contradictory feelings, but I soon fell asleep.

Waking up, I saw Sherlock Holmes and his brother, who sat in a chair a few yards away from me. My friend leaned back in his chair and clasped his fingertips together, was immersed in deep thought. Mycroft leaned forward, hands on his knees, and, apparently, also reflected on the mystery.

- How kind of you to visit me! - I cried, with some effort taking a sitting position.

- My dear Watson, how pleased I am that you are better! - Said my friend. - Sleep and care of Miss Beck, obviously, created a miracle.

- Yes, things are not so bad - I said, gently moving his wounded arm. - I think tomorrow I'll be on my feet. However, a few days I will have to wear the arm in a sling.

- Due to the incident with you at least we bummed some of my information, - muttered Mycroft.

- Indeed?- I'm interested. - So, your suspicions against Roderick Keeley confirmed?

- On the contrary, - said my friend. - We are convinced that it really was an accident.

After seeing the shot, which Miss Beck took out of your hand, we found that this is the tenth number, designed for hunting birds and small game. If he wanted to kill you, it took at least twenty numbers. Anyway, such a gunslinger as Roderick Keeley would hit right on target, and you would not be wounded in the arm. No, our suspicions converge Miss Beck.

- What evidence did you find?

- Her recent behavior with you, at least, raises questions.

- What the hell do you mean, Holmes? - I shouted, feeling the blood rush to my face.

Sherlock Holmes and Mycroft laughed merrily.

- Well, well, Watson - jokingly said my friend. - No need to be modest: Lady have always been your weakness. By disheveled appearance and disorder in the dress Miss Beck, it was clear what she did, even if we were not told about it now your reaction.

- We assume that this is so, - I said - but what it might be related to the theft of jewels?

- If it is a criminal, then she could have imagined that it would be nice if someone took her side, feeding her tender feelings. It is also possible blackmail.

- I can not believe this!

- However, I recognize that women conduct motives are not always amenable to logical analysis. However, Mycroft also not sitting idle.

- I was watching the movements of the boy - said Mycroft. - And I note that it enjoys a certain freedom. With ten to twelve, and then from three to five he regularly gives lessons in the classroom of Miss Beck. It also deals with them when he gets out of bed and go to sleep, as well as during meals. However, in this routine there are gaps, and several times I noticed him wandering around the house without supervision. Once he went to the kitchen to chat with the cook and probably eat round sweets with liquor. Without a doubt, he comes in his mother's room. And what could be more natural, if Miss Beck, finding a baby in his mother's room, take him out of there? So, as we see, it is nothing in this case, not risk. Not only because she has lived in this house knows a thousand places to hide the necklace, and a thousand opportunities to pick it up, let's say in a few months. But Roderick Keeley - an infrequent visitor in the house.

- Of course, your arguments convincing - I admitted with a heavy heart - but I still can not believe that she was capable of such duplicity.

- There will be seen - my friend said. - So far, nothing has been proven.

At this point we were interrupted. Soon dinner was served, and I was feeling got stronger enough to sit at the table. I find it hard to eat with one hand, although the maid finely chopped meat for me, before you apply. After lunch I did not stay to drink brandy and a chat, while referring to a difficult day, I went to lie down early.

The next morning was clear and cold. It was Christmas Eve, and after breakfast Posletueyt went into the woods and came back with a beautiful Christmas tree seven feet tall. He firmly secured it in a large clay pot in the far corner of the room, and after lunch the whole family began to decorate a Christmas tree. Mainly it was engaged in Mrs. Parsons, and others helped her. The exception was Mycroft, who sat down heavily in a chair, watching us graciously. We decorated the tree with tinsel, hanging on the branches colored paper stars and built a red and white candles. Sherlock Holmes, who was tall, put the angel on the very top. Of course, Christopher came in great excitement. He was allowed to participate in this exciting business, but his chubby handle knocked more toys than hanged.

Later, John Parsons ordered to hang out in the room holly branches, according to the English tradition.

This done, we went about their business. I'm not looking for Miss Beck society, feeling that he was in a shameful position. On my part, it was not good immediately after the embrace afford to consult with those who are suspected of a crime for a Woman. For its part, Ms. Beck and I mean not filed, if there was something unusual. By evening, she invited me to change the dressing, to which I agreed. However, we are not left alone during the procedure, and so I escaped embarrassment.

Perhaps for the sake of celebration, John Parsons did not mention the missing rubies. However, on the day he could no longer hold back and asked me, Sherlock Holmes and Mycroft come to his office.

- I have to ask, gentlemen, if you managed to find the keys to the mystery of the disappearance of my wife's necklace. It's been three days since his disappearance, and, frankly, I'm afraid it's gone forever.

He said Sherlock Holmes:

- We have some clues, and I still hope to eventually solve the riddle. In the end, the suspects are not so many.

John Parsons shook his head sadly:

- That's what I was most upset and. Whoever the culprit turned out to be, it will be close to me, whom I trusted and who shamelessly betrayed me. I would probably have given up on a thousand pounds, which is a necklace, but would not recognize this.

My friend nodded with a sympathetic view, and soon we left the office.

Razdernuv curtains in her room on Christmas morning, I looked at the shining mountains, clear sky and felt the joy of life. My hand was much better, and I ventured to abandon a sling.

At breakfast, we congratulated each other on the holiday. Of course, there was no way to go to church in Settle, which is usually attended the Parsons family, but at eleven o'clock, John Parsons called all households and made a small prayer. I regret to note that the cook was nervous all the time, obviously worrying about the goose that was unattended.

Then they exchanged gifts, and I was delighted, having received from the Sherlock Holmes sword cane. This wonderful thing produced firm "James Smith and Sons" with Oxford Street. I awkwardly took his sword, acting with one hand and took a few shots. There was no doubt that it is not just useful in our future adventures.

We gathered again in a flaming fire, and Christopher will play on the rug before the fire. He was overjoyed, because he received a box of tin soldiers, quite exquisitely painted. He put them in the battalions, and they marched on the mat, and the baby uttered a battle cry.

- Well, my boy, your reinforcements arrived! - I said to him. - Do your fort will now have enough defenders, not every general can boast this.

- Yes, - said the baby - now I no longer need those thick.

- Thick soldiers? - I asked. - You must necessarily be strict. To urge a minute longer in their patrol, and they instantly lose weight.

- No, because they are still overturned.

Sherlock Holmes pricked up his ears when he heard our conversation and said to the boy:
- Who gave you a fat soldier, Christopher?

- I found them. In my mother's room.

We all exchanged glances, and we start to reach the truth. Then they all burst out laughing, except for a child who looked at us in bewilderment.

- Come on! - My friend said, jumping up from his chair. - Let's go to the fort and will send these soldiers unfit to resign!

We ran up the stairs, and John Parsons was carrying her son in her arms, and Mycroft snorted, closing the procession. Tumbled together in the classroom, we gathered around the fort. Sherlock Holmes fell to his knees and peered into the goal. Reaching inside, he pulled out a gorgeous ruby necklace. All zagaldeli joyfully shouting greetings.

- Your necklace, Madame, - with a bow Holmes turned to Mrs. Parsons, handing her a precious jewel.

She took the necklace and, laughing, put on his neck.

- And you, sadly, Watson, - said my friend, turning to me - were the unwitting instigator. When you're having a vast knowledge of military affairs, pointed out that it is not enough to strengthen protected what was done to the young general as not to recruit new recruits wherever he found them no?

I spread my hands, pretending to despair, though with all felt a huge relief.

- My friends, - appealed to us, John Parsons - I had long passed noon. Let's go to the dining room and celebrate this joyous day at the table - there we are expected, according to the cook, the biggest goose in the Dales.

We agreed in unison and followed the master of the house. I suggested that the right hand of Miss Beck, who leaned with a smile on her her graceful handle, and we started down the stairs together, as one of the happiest couples in England this Christmas day.

Notes

1 *Tween-decks* - the space between two decks or deck and the platform inside the hull. - *Here and further notes the translator, except those marked otherwise.*

2 At Harley Street located adoptive famous London physicians.

3 In 1941, a Dutch anthropologist Gustav von Koenigswald giant skull found on neighboring Sumatra island of Java. He named this subspecies *Meganthropus Javanese (Meganthropus javanicus)*. Based on the above evidence, the giant came from Sumatra. - *G. Reynoldc.*

4 The game consists in the fact that horse chestnut, strung on a rope, hit the other chestnuts, trying to break them.

5 The Royal Society - a leading research center, performs the functions of the National Academy of Sciences. It is the oldest scientific society of Great Britain was established in 1660.

6 Brazilian Emperor Pedro II was deposed in 1889, when his country proclaimed a republic.

7 Palm pavilion - heated greenhouse for growing exotic plants - have become one of the status symbols of Victorian England. A few samples of these ornate buildings of glass and steel still exist. Palm Pavilion Gardens, Kew, built in 1848, designed by Decimus Burton, reaches 111 meters long, 30 meters wide and 20 meters high. In those days it was the most ambitious greenhouse in the world.

8 It is about arisen in antiquity doctrine proclaims that the state of the human body is defined by four basic life juice (liquid): blood, bile, black bile and mucus (phlegm, lymph).

9 This refers to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, which Britain waged against the Boer republics - Transvaal (South African Republic) and the Orange Free State.

10 [John Neville] *Maskelyne* (1839-1917) - famous British magician and inventor, who ridiculed pseudogipnoz and spiritualism, showing tricks with a body hovering over the surface of the table and other "miracles".

11 [Lucius Caelius Firmian] *Lactantius* (about 250 - . 325 approx.) - A well-known Christian theologian from Africa, which adopted Christianity in 303 AD.

12 [Felicia] *Hemans* (1793-1835) - English poet, romantic poems which were popular in the XIX century.

13 A lion. 19:31.

14 Exodus 22:18.

15 William Shakespeare Hamlet. Act 1. Translation of M. Lozinski.

16 William Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice. Act IV. Translated by T. Shchepkina-Kupernik.

17 "Rivals" - the first comedy by English playwright Richard Sheridan (1751-1816), which was staged at the theater "Covent Garden" in 1775.

18 After the overthrow of James II Stuart during the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688 the king of England was the Dutch ruler William of Orange, who was married to the daughter of James II, Mary II Stuart, and ruled jointly with her.

19 It is about the People Nicholas Rysakova, Ignatius Tszhnevitskom and Ivan Emelyanov, that March 1, 1881 participated in the murder of Alexander II. In addition to them in the group of throwers entered Timofei Mikhailov, but he did not appear at the Catherine Canal, feeling that he could not make an attempt.

20 This division of the London Metropolitan Police, established in 1883, initially engaged in the fight against a secret organization "Irish Republican Brotherhood." Later, a special

service has been endowed with the political police functions, it laid the protection of the royal family, British and foreign statesmen.

21 *Palimpsest* - a manuscript on parchment made over washed away or scraped text. Palimpsests were distributed prior to the start of printing.

22 *Nell* (Eleanor) *Gwyn* (1650-1687) - British actress, better known as the favorite of the King of England Charles II. Their illegitimate son received from the king the title of Duke of St. Olbenskogo, ushering in this genus.

23 Incunabula - books related to the initial pore printing (up to 1501) that look like handwriting.

24 [Luigi] *Galvani* (1737-1798) - Italian anatomist and physiologist, one of the founders of electrophysiology and learning about electricity.

25 [Alessandro] *Volta* (1745-1827) - an Italian physicist and physiologist, one of the founders of the theory of electricity.

26 *Chuck* (Shaka) *the Great* (1787-1828) - the founder and first ruler (INOX) Power Zulu (Zulu Empire) in South Africa.